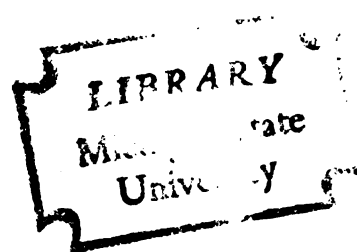


THE FUNCTION OF PLANNING IN THE
CHARTER TOWNSHIP FORM OF GOVERNMENT:
THE CASE OF MERIDIAN CHARTER TOWNSHIP

Thesis for the Degree of M. U. P.
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ABSTRACT

THE FUNCTION OF PLANNING IN THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP FORM OF GOVERNMENT: THE CASE OF MERIDIAN CHARTER TOWNSHIP

By

Richard Wesley Wilberg

The urbanization of rural areas often requires unique governmental forms and planning programs to cope with the problems of development. This need was acknowledged by the legislature of the state of Michigan in 1948. Under the Charter Township Act, townships were modernized to handle rural and urban problems through the adoption of a state charter. Since the creation of charter townships, critics point out that charter townships have not fulfilled their legislative intent--to provide a transitional governing function. Instead, they have developed as quasi-cities or self-perpetuating entities which merely duplicate the efforts of more efficient urbanized forms.

This thesis investigates the situation with the aim of determining why charter townships have not fulfilled their expectations. Two approaches to the problem are taken.

Form.--The form government assumes largely determines the legal parameters within which the functions of government are executed. Charter township government may be examined as a transitional form of government.

Function.--The functions assumed by government within the rural-urban fringe are a direct result of the forces of urbanization. This thesis examines the relationship between the function of government and the process of urbanization in Meridian Township using a case study approach. The conclusions of the case study illustrate the function of charter townships as a transitional government.

The relationship between the form and function of charter township government is expressed through the quality of a community's planning program. Planning seeks to reconcile form with function by providing an intermediary role between the citizenry and government. As such, planning becomes the key element in discussion of the weaknesses of charter townships.

This weakness is a direct result of planning's preoccupation with administrative detail at the expense of a more comprehensive approach. No doubt due to the suburban style of life, planning finds itself a victim of its own achievements. There are few significant advantages in abandoning charter township government in

favor of more urbanized forms. The suburbanite cannot be convinced that other forms of government will not destroy the type of environment he has sought and achieved.

Suburban development is derived from a necessity to escape urban patterns of growth. Charter townships have encouraged this type of growth. How, then, may charter townships be expected to function as a transitional government? The inability of planning to resolve this dilemma is directly responsible for the inability of charter townships to function as transitional governments in the process of urbanization.

THE FUNCTION OF PLANNING IN THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP
FORM OF GOVERNMENT: THE CASE OF MERIDIAN
CHARTER TOWNSHIP

By

Richard Wesley Wilberg

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The urbanization of rural areas often requires unique solutions to problems of development. As the rate of development increases so do the demands upon government. This problem was acknowledged by the legislature of the State of Michigan in 1948. It was their belief that the township form of government, being the principal form of local rural government, could not adequately meet the demands of an urbanizing area nor could it cope with the pressures placed upon it. The township's responsibility to administer its own development was so seriously hampered by statutory limitation that some claimed that all areas in the first stages of urbanization should immediately incorporate in order to assure adequate means for operation.

The state legislature, realizing the need for a transitional form of government - a government legally able to handle both rural and urban problems - saw fit to modernize township government by providing the option for townships to adopt a state charter. The aim of this act was to create an interim governing function; a form

of government which has been described as a "halfway house to urbanization."¹

The powers granted to the charter township under the Charter Act included expanded powers to tax and to plan. The power to tax provides government with the ability to assume needed programs while the ability to plan assures their efficient and equitable implementation. Thus, the power to plan would seem to be the key feature of a government concerned with bridging the gap between rural and urban development. As a result, the inability of this form of government to function in a transitional role may be traced to a similar inability within the planning function.

Thesis Objective

The objective of this thesis is to illustrate why planning may not operate within the charter township form of government. Also I will illustrate how this apparent failure of planning relates to an unfavorable judgment of charter township government in general. Two approaches to the problem are taken.

Form

The form township government assumes largely determines its ability to cope with the problems of

¹Robert B. Hotaling, Charter Township Act 359, Public Acts of 1947, State of Michigan (East Lansing: MSU, Institute for Community Development, 1960), p. 1.

suburban development. The Charter Township Act provides a suitable structure for townships to remedy these problems through broad taxing and bonding powers. In addition, charter townships are permitted to expand personnel and public facilities to a level rivaling that of cities. The relatively low tax rate in conjunction with statutory limited expenditures has proven desirable for the governing of residential development. The conservative influence of rurally oriented officials tends to carry over after a township charters, producing a moderating influence on development. Thus, both rural and urban interests receive adequate concern as charter townships provide personalized government to the citizenry in the form of the lay planning commissions.

Function

The major disappointment of this form of government is a direct result of its achievements. There are few significant advantages in abandoning charter townships in favor of more urbanized forms. This is due in part to the style of life that charter townships have encouraged. Suburban development is derived from a necessity to escape urban patterns of growth. Governments function in response to the wishes of the polity; however, government may misconstrue the desires of the electorate for one pattern of growth

over another. This is especially true as government begins to become a bureaucracy and tends to lose contact with the public interest.

Definition of the public interest as the 'actions of government' is not compatible with suburban growth due to the absence of a unified public interest. This type of growth represents an influx of outside interests to an area that was previously self-sufficient. As a result, the planning commission experiences difficulty identifying proper lines of action to satisfy all. This situation is worsened by planning's tendency to lose its autonomy through its close interrelationships with government. This tendency is accelerated as planning assumes a greater share of government's administrative burdens as it neglects the comprehensive approach.

Special interest groups tend to dominate planning as its distance from the public's ideology increases. Planning has not fulfilled its intermediary function between the citizenry and their government. Likewise, it does not respond to the wishes of the citizenry regarding the type of development they are seeking. Planning represents the primary function of a form of government concerned with problems of development. Thus, a concern for the functions of government must begin with an analysis of the function of planning and how it relates to the process of urbanization.

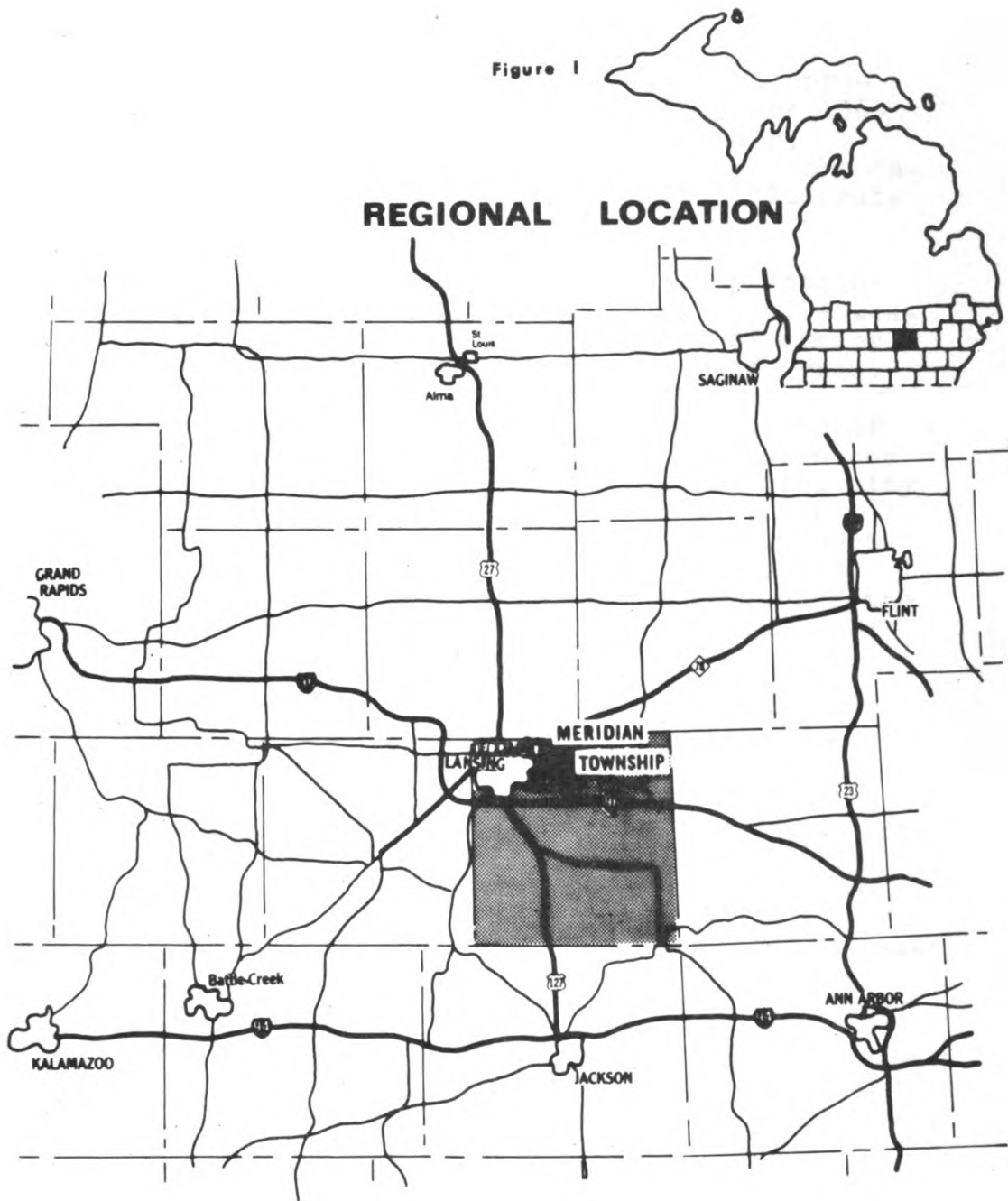
Thesis Approach

Chapter II analyzes the process of urbanization in order to create an understanding for the function of planning in charter townships. Urbanization is explained as a three-part process of intervening patterns of human activity. These patterns are designated as the physical, cultural, and institutional.

Within this conceptual framework, the process of urbanization in a typical suburban community is investigated. The selection of Meridian Township for a case study as a typical suburban community may be questioned by some. Certainly, there is no one typical community, for every area faces problems which are unique to its own particular circumstances. However, Meridian Township, Ingham County, Michigan, located just east of, and adjacent to, the urban area of Lansing-East Lansing, is similar enough with regard to locational factors to other central Michigan suburban areas to warrant its use as a case for study of Michigan townships. Figure 1 illustrates the regional location of Meridian Township.

Other characteristics of Meridian Township can also be used to justify this selection of a case for study. Among these are the following:

1. Meridian's greatest period of growth occurred during the post war push to suburbia period when population from 1940 to 1950 was increased by 91 per cent. A 52 per cent increase from 1950 to 1960 also indicates a high level of growth



despite annexation to East Lansing of several populous areas of the Township.¹

2. Development-wise, Meridian Township has proposed city incorporation on the November 1969 ballot. Thus, a study of this township, urbanized enough to contemplate city incorporation may be used to more completely illustrate the process of urbanization.
3. Meridian Township also contains a population composition of age, ethnic origin, race, educational attainment, income, and type of employment which is similar to most suburban areas.
4. Meridian Township has three concentrations of population. One is located at the western end of the township adjoining the East Lansing city limits; another is in the northeast corner around Lake Lansing, including the unincorporated village of Haslett; and the third, and largest, is situated close to the center of the township and includes the unincorporated village of Okemos plus the surrounding subdivisions. The rest of the township is open country, with relatively denser settlements along main roads providing a good basis for study of the rural-urban balance.

Chapter III approaches the thesis objective from a legal point of view. Here the concern is with an analysis of the form of township government as it relates to the process of urbanization. However, it is shown that an institutional form cannot be evaluated without a discussion of its function. The power to plan is shown as the greatest single difference between the two forms of township government.

Chapter IV investigates the planning process as consisting of two separate, though usually compatible,

¹United States Decennial Census (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960).

activities. The chapter is directed toward this planning process as it best explains the function of charter township government. Planning in Meridian Township is found to be a disappointment as its failure to recognize the needs and desires of the citizenry has precipitated the inability of charter townships to achieve their legislative intent. Although planning has successfully implemented sewer, water, and other public programs very necessary to the urbanization of the Township; it is shown that planning has not followed the best interests of the community with regard to the administration of commercial development. Limited administrative success cannot overshadow the failure to plan comprehensively. As such, this has tended to be the most serious weakness of charter township government in Meridian.

Chapter V is concerned with establishing a conclusion to the objective of this thesis. Here the form and function of charter townships are analyzed as they pertain to the discussion of previous chapters.

Thesis Limitations

The scope of a thesis employing a case study approach is difficult to define. I have selected an analysis of the planning function as I believe it best expresses the function of charter township government. Certainly, charter townships may be discussed using other criteria and

judgments rendered accordingly. However, only that material pertaining to the thesis objective, as identified in the introduction of each chapter, forms the basis of this thesis. From this discussion, judgment is drawn.

CHAPTER II

URBANIZATION IN MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP

Introduction

The process of urbanization may be expressed as a cumulative effect of specific human activities. These activities may be thought of as consisting of various form-creating subsystems. Perhaps the most obvious of these is the physical environment in which we live. This arti-factual subsystem has tended to be the traditional indicator of levels of urbanization for those concerned with the process of urban growth. Nels Anderson illustrates:

Levels of urbanism can . . . be visualized by various concrete types of evidence, although the measure normally used is the number of people . . . moving from rural to urban places. Also, it means the landscape becoming urbanized.¹

The development of this artifactual subsystem and its ultimate appraisal is dependent upon cltural meanings and values. These characteristics of our society form the basis of the second subsystem of human activity. The cultural subsystem may be used in examining the process of urbanization. According to Weaver:

¹Nels Anderson, Urbanism and Urbanization (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1964) p. 1.

It is human beings who, today, are shaping the vast metropolitan areas which house some two thirds of the population in this Nation. Consequently, it is in terms of people that urban problems must be perceived and their solutions developed.¹

The balance between the physical environment and the cultural sphere is achieved through the institutional subsystems.² Perhaps the most significant component of the institutional subsystem is represented by government. This form-creating component is recognized by Sokolow who has found that general patterns exist in the governmental response of most rural communities to the pressures of urbanization. They are:

1. Change from restrictive regulatory measures to facilitative service programs.
2. Change from extensive to intensive services, involving a shift from low to high financial and administrative requirements.
3. Change from stability to change in the structures of local government, with emphasis on form of representation and legal and financial abilities as well as the professionalization of government.³

¹Robert C. Weaver, The Urban Complex (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1960), p. 26.

²Pitirim A. Sorokin, Society Culture and Personality (New York: Cooper Square, 1962), pp. 69-85, 93-99.

³Alvin D. Sokolow, Governmental Response to Urbanization: Three Townships on the Rural-Urban Gradient (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1968), p. 111.

Hence, the process of urbanization may be examined as a conceptual framework consisting of three subsystems which combine to give form and meaning through the institutional subsystem to the patterns of human activity. Figure 2 illustrates this conceptual framework used in this chapter.

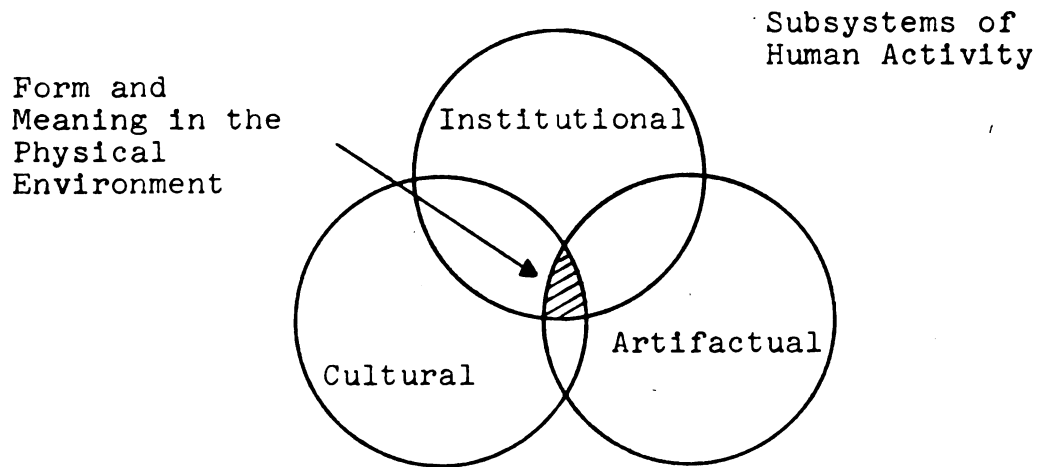


FIGURE 2.--A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of the Process of Urbanization

Development in Meridian Township

Early History

The origins of development in Meridian Township may be said to have resulted from the pattern of early state history. Although Meridian was not officially recognized as a political entity until 1841, the geographical form of townships was due to the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance of 1785.

It was this primary piece of legislation, by a nation yet recovering from the War of Independence, that was to act as a preliminary step in the development of our present system of local government. The Ordinance of 1785 provided for the survey and sale of lands ceded to the national government by the various states and Indian tribes. By this survey, the congressional township, a 36-square mile block of land, was designed for the purpose of locating and describing land within its boundaries. The typical township contained 36-square miles, each square mile called a section and designated by a consecutive numbering system beginning from the northeast corner of the township. Any parcel of land within the section could easily be located as a given distance from two adjacent section lines. Likewise, any particular township could easily be located by the number of townships between it and the territorial east-west baseline. This distance was known as the range

of the township while its distance east or west of several principal meridians pinpointed the township's exact location.

In 1787 Congress conferred upon the Governor of the Northwest Territory the power to create counties out of groups of townships. However, it was not until 1805 that Congress created the Territory of Michigan. The newly appointed Governor was empowered to incorporate townships and provide for the election of government officers to supervise territorial affairs. By 1825 the Michigan Territorial Legislative Council was the only legislative entity having jurisdiction in the vast wilderness that was Michigan. In 1827 the Council created the Township Meeting form of government, which was the first of its kind to be adopted in a territory west of the Allegheny Mountains. The Congressional township provided the geographical boundaries for this embryonic form of government.¹

The territorial governor during this embryonic period was Lewis Cass. In office from 1813 to 1831, Governor Cass was influential in the initial forms of Michigan local government.

¹Arthur W. Bromage and Thomas H. Reid, Organization and Cost of County and Township Government (Detroit: Committee of Inquiry of Government, 1933), pp. 6-9.

Governor Cass was thoroughly imbued with New England ideas of local self-government under which he was born and brought up. He was, more than anyone else (sic), who instituted county and town government in Michigan. He gradually abandoned the appointment of county and township officers, and urged, nay, required the people to elect them.¹

Ingham County was surveyed in 1829 and officially became a county in 1838 with a total population of less than 100. The County was settled relatively later than those in the surrounding areas, no doubt due to the absence of early transportation routes within its boundaries. In 1830 the Territorial Road was surveyed from Ann Arbor to the west connecting Jackson, Battle Creek, and St. Joseph. Early settlers went west from Detroit along this road and gradually infiltrated north into Ingham County. Oakland, Livingston, and Clinton Counties were also settled prior to Ingham County by pioneers who followed Indian trails northwest from Detroit over the Saginaw Trail.

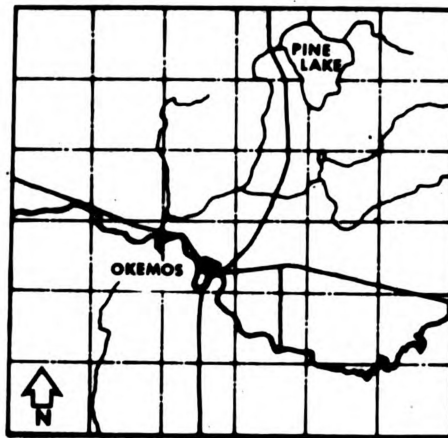
Meridian's First Settlement

In November of 1832, E. Pierce purchased the first land in Ingham County at the location of what is now present-day Okemos. Figure 3, Development in Meridian Township, illustrates the general location of this pioneer

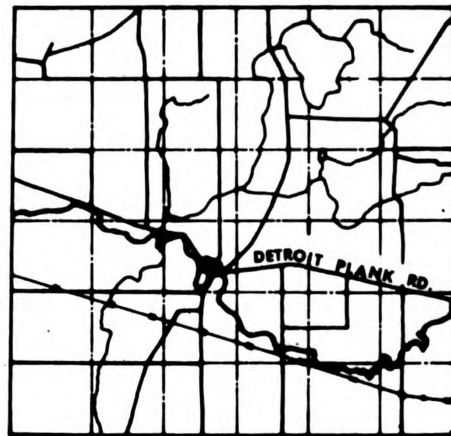
¹Edward W. Bemis, Local Government in Michigan and the Northwest (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1883), pp. 12-13.

DEVELOPMENT IN MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP

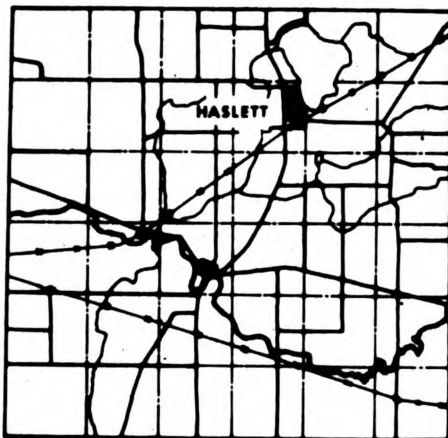
figure 3



1850



1873



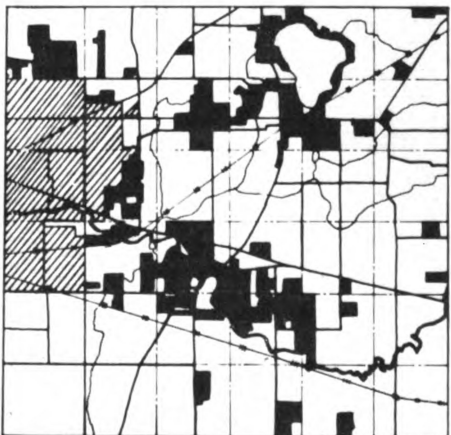
1895



1928



1945



1969

settlement as well as the other major developments in the Township's history. At that time, Okemos was the main center of Indian activity for a band of approximately 500 Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. Led by Chief Okemos, the band roamed all of Ingham County while planting crops and burying their dead in the Okemos area. By 1833, three land claims were located in Okemos. It would be another three years until the first land was to be claimed in Lansing.

In 1835 the Marshal brothers became the first residents in Meridian Township by building a log cabin near Pine Lake (Lake Lansing). This settlement preceded the first settlement in Lansing by two years. Freeman Bray arrived in Okemos in 1840 and bought the land claim of Pierce. Bray then platted the Village of Hamilton which, in 1858, was changed to Okemos in honor of the Indian chief. By 1842 Okemos was a booming lumbermill town, and it appeared that it might be destined to be the metropolis of central Michigan.¹

Michigan Becomes a State

However, the troubles which had plagued the newly created State of Michigan (1836) reached crucial proportions after 1846. The State capitol at Detroit, with

¹Frank M. Turner, An Account of Ingham County from Its Organization, Vol. III (Lansing: National Historical Association, Inc., 1924), pp. 264-267.

its cosmopolitan population, its proximity to French-Canada, and its recent disputes with the State of Ohio over their common boundary, no longer appeared a desirable location for the offices of government. In 1847 the State Legislature enacted a bill that moved the State Capitol to Lansing Township where free offers of land were plentiful. By December of 1847, a group of temporary structures had been erected and legislators began moving into the Capitol in the wilderness.¹

The first legislative session at Lansing met in the spring of 1848. The Legislature did not reconvene until 1850 when the State Constitution was revised giving township government the general form it has to this day. By 1852 talk had ceased regarding moving the Capitol to a more "hospitable environ" as Lansing began to assume a dominant role as an economic center as well as the nucleus of state government. Likewise, a more responsible role in local government was assumed when Lansing became a city in 1859. Following the Civil War, Lansing became a marketing center for farm produce and timber products, earning the name of the "best wheat market in Michigan".² By the 1880's, few people heard

¹Ibid., pp. 82-89.

²Birt Darling, City in the Forest, The Story of Lansing (New York: Stratford House, 1950), p. 195.

of Okemos outside of those in the Lansing area. Okemos became a subdominant agricultural center to Lansing.

Meridian's First Government

In 1841 Meridian, Delhi, and Lansing Townships were carved out of the larger Alaiden Township. Governments were organized for each, and George Mathews was elected first supervisor of Meridian Township. At this time, the population of Meridian Township was approximately 50 people. Most of these early settlers were of English descent but there were also a few Germans, as evidenced by the early gravestones in the old cemetery. These settlers were instrumental in constructing the first recorded road in the Township (Okemos Road). Other early roads include Shiawassee (Green Road) and Meridian Road. By 1850 it became obvious that a better road was needed between Lansing and Detroit, and construction began on the Howell Plank Road (Grand River Avenue). The road was completed to Detroit by 1860 and one could ride a stagecoach from Okemos to Detroit for three dollars and twenty four hours of bumps and rolls. By 1858 the Detroit-Milwaukee Railroad constructed a line through the township, bypassing Okemos in favor of Lansing.

Michigan Agricultural College

The Lansing area appeared to be developing as a center for other than agricultural and governmental

activities when the Michigan Agricultural College was formally dedicated eastwardly of the city in 1857. This institution, the first land grant college established under the Morrill Act, consisted of a president, four faculty members, and one English tutor who doubled as a farm economy instructor. Students worked for their room and board by clearing and fencing the original sixty acres of the M.A.C. campus. By 1887 the College had grown to such large proportions that available land surrounding the campus was being eyed for development. The City of Collegeville was platted that year and construction began in housing for workmen employed by the College.¹

In 1895 additional land was platted adjacent to the Collegeville plat in order to provide more housing for workers and professors. Demand was also increasing for commercial establishments and for an elementary school system. This fledgling community became the City of East Lansing in 1908.

By 1890 logging in Meridian Township had pretty well depleted the available supply of timber. The second railroad in the Township (now the Grand Trunk), built in the late 1870's, bypassed Okemos again in favor of a

¹Turner, pp. 127-134.

northern route. In the years that followed, some of the merchants moved from Okemos to Haslett in order to be on the rail line. Haslett had its first platted village in the 1880's and began to rival Okemos as a business center. The combination of these and other factors resulted in Okemos becoming little more than a farm service community. By the turn of the century, it was obvious that Meridian Township as a whole would suffer the same fate as Okemos.

The Influence of Industrialization

However, several developments of the late 19th century were to have significant impact upon the regional development of the early twentieth century. The most important of this period was the rapid industrialization of Lansing. From 1890 to 1910, Lansing nearly doubled her number of industries even though quite a few had folded during the financial crisis of 1893. The most important of these industrial firms was the Olds Motor Works Company, which was established in 1904. By 1908 Lansing's industrial base was expanded to include the REO Motor Car Company and the Prudden Company (Motor Wheel).

In a few short years, from 1901 to 1914, Lansing had changed as few cities in the world had changed before or since, and future sociologists will no doubt choose this city for a study of the impact of the automobile industry upon the life of a people who, from simple artisans and farmers,

found themselves caught in the whirlpool of profound change.¹

Another development which had a profound effect upon the growth of Meridian Township was the incorporation of the City of East Lansing and the completion of the State's first strip of concrete highway between Lansing and East Lansing in 1914. As a result, the East Lansing grew and prospered, it gradually attracted Lansing's industrialists to make their homes in the serene surrounding of the college town.

By the 1920's, East Lansing had earned the reputation of having some of the finest homes in the Greater Lansing Area. Business boomed, college enrollments expanded, and the subdivision of residential land spread along Grand River Avenue into the eastern areas of Meridian Township. These areas were promptly annexed to the growing city. Prosperity and growth suddenly halted, however, as the entire nation suffered through the great depression. During the 1930's, Okemos, and to a lesser degree Haslett, regained some of the dominance they had lost to Lansing during earlier days as people in Meridian Township began to identify less with Lansing due to the poverty they experienced at home. With the return of prosperity during the 1940's, the suburban trends begun during the 1920's continued to shape the rural areas of

¹Darling, pp. 165-166.

the township into a distinct physical form. The significance of suburban development is a prerequisite to understanding the development of the cultural subsystem in Meridian Township.

Suburban Development The Artifactual Environment

The development of suburbia, common to the fringes of most urban areas, has been largely explained as a twentieth century phenomenon. The suburbs of the early twentieth century housed the upper class of Lansing's urban society. However, it was not until the peak of post World War II prosperity that Meridian Township began to change to a great degree. With the advent of increased transportation technology and increasing national income, middle class families joined the rush to suburbia. Although few of those making the transition during this period could actually afford a home in suburbia, they were buoyed by the anticipation of ever-increasing income and the prospects of ultimate return upon their landed investments.

Foremost among these instigators of this suburban anticipation was the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) guaranteed mortgage program, which in conjunction with the land developer, set the scale of extensive residential development. This pattern of development reached to lower income levels of Lansing's population following World War II through Veterans Administration (VA)

mortgage programs which granted veterans bigger mortgages at lower rates for longer periods of time. Conventional loans also became available on a much broader scale. The wide availability of credit, increasing housing technology, higher levels of prosperity, the influx of war-weary veterans seeking the peace and solitude of the suburbs, income tax breaks for middle income families, larger families for younger newlyweds all helped contribute to the post war housing boom and the land grab in Meridian Township.¹

The phenomenon creating suburban development is dwarfed, however, by the magnitude of environmental changes directly responsible to the middle class exodus from the city. Principal among these is the obvious impression upon the rural landscape, creating the physical form of our metropolitan areas.

Land in close proximity to East Lansing was quickly grabbed by land developers hungry to populate the fringes. As the demand for more land increased, potential homeowners became satisfied with traveling greater distances from home to work. These commuters colonized the rural landscape, threading their way through hill and dale upon concrete ribbons creating spread development known

¹Glen H. Beyer, Housing and Society (New York: McMillan Co., 1965), p. 360.

as urban sprawl. The significance of this is aptly illustrated by Edward Higbee:

The push to suburbia seems a magnificent inspiration to all aspiring refugees from the city. Each downtown mugging, each outbreak of juvenile violence terrifies more parents into risking whatever credit they can muster just to get away where the whole family might feel safe; where the children could receive a better education and associate with more desirable companions. Blurbs in the Sunday papers that depict endless delights at Riverforest Heights put their minds in a giddy spin. "Excellent schools," "low taxes," "next door to open country," "short drive to town," "exclusive community of friendly neighbors"-such pabulum to the harassed is very attractive especially when it is sweetened with "low down payments" and "monthly installments just like rent" and "you own your own home." The catch, of course, is that no one gets anything for nothing even at Riverforest Heights, despite all the "savings by experienced builders."

While local taxes may have been low the year Riverforest Heights was on the drafting board, by the time 500 happy families have moved in and demanded services a rather remarkable metamorphosis has begun which never seems to end. More children arrive each year, and each September the school enrollment goes up. Taxes seem to have a way of growing up with a growing community. Meanwhile, new subdivisions rise all around Riverforest Heights. The leafy trees on the horizon are replaced with utility poles, while the river that was there for a summer is boxed up in a concrete culvert and buried by bulldozers to make room for more house lots. The short drive to town takes longer and longer as more and more commuters share the once open road and throttle it with traffic. The irrespressibly enthusiastic promoters liquidate their Riverforest Builders, Inc., hitch up their office trailer, and move on to create "Meadowland Farms," a few miles farther out where it is again "next door to open country" and "taxes are low."¹

¹Edward Higbee, The Squeeze (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1960), pp. 105-106.

Gottman is quick to point out that sprawl may not be the net result of the popular notion equating it with lack of planning. He maintains that the planning function is not bound with a theoretical reluctance to direct the economy but with a natural reticence to innovate. Lack of innovativeness, according to Sokolow, is a trait of rurally controlled, agrarian-oriented government.¹

The answer to this planner's dilemma is probably that the citizen's dream is to achieve a mode of life combining all the advantages of a rural setting and urban life and excluding all the short-comings of both. He is reaching land and heaven, for security, opportunity, comfort, and excitement all at the same time. This multifaceted target makes for progress and for sprawl, but also for disorder and frustration.²

This disorder and frustration is exhibited in the clash of interest groups resulting from suburban development.

Urbanization The Cultural Environment

The suburban phenomena within Meridian Township may also be explained as a basic change from a population originating in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century to those born in a later day. These older residents represented a stage of urbaniza-

¹Sokolow, p. iii.

²Jean Gottman and Robert A. Harper, Metropolis on the Move: Geographers Look at Urban Sprawl (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), p. 12.

tion which may be described as the rural-oriented development process where land subdivision occurred specifically for the sons and daughters of local resident farmers. Businessmen, for the most part, were of local origin with strong ties to the historical background of their community. Outside interests represented a small minority which was usually coerced into embracing the majority point of view. Though land cost and subdivision activity had increased over a period of time, they were within reasonable limits due to the fact that everyone felt to be the neighbor of every other resident of the community. As a result, like treatment begate like treatment with the result that no one really stood to gain at anyone's unjustified expense. In addition, social ostracization served as a potent substitution for limited governmental regulation.¹

Suburban development represents departure from the rural-oriented pattern. This state of development usually evolves out of this rural-oriented pattern and is represented by a marked increase in outside interests within the area. These interests, usually non-agrarian, may be the result of:

1. an expanding sphere of influence of an adjacent urban center;

¹Leo Schnore, "The Growth of Metropolitan Suburbs," American Sociological Review (April, 1957), pp. 165-168.

2. improved transportation and communication;
3. an untapped potential recently discovered;
4. a shift of the resident attitude toward the desirability of greater economic returns.

Whether in combination or singly, each of the factors is usually instrumental in initiating the transformation process from rural to urban. For here marks the origin of suburbanization as that type of growth evolving out of the influx of outside interests into a previously self-sufficient community.

Dr. Duke identifies the social makeup of such a community as consisting of oldtimers and newcomers.¹ Newcomers differ from their counterparts in that they do not share the same historical ties with the community. They are largely emigrants from urban areas, younger in age, of higher income levels, largely white collar and tradesmen and professionals. Generally, these emigrants possess higher levels of education, less group identity, and an increased interest in participation in government in order to improve their vested interests. They are commuters, generally working in one area and living in another. Largely dominated by economics, they are concerned not with what government can do for the community but what government can do for

¹Richard D. Duke, Planning in the Urban Fringe (East Lansing: Institute for Community Development, 1963), p. 1.

them. They are greater demanders of government services and are willing and able to finance various improvements. In general, they represent the antithesis of the oldtimers resulting in increased friction in group interaction.¹

One result of this increased friction of group interaction is a necessity for a more representative form of government. For the newcomers, a government more able to fulfill their demands is desired; while for the oldtimers, a government more able to hold back on runaway development (as they see it) and to protect their vested interests is necessary.

Urbanization--The Institutional Environment

Governmental activities have been the greatest form-creating component of the institutional subsystem. Government represents an intermediary regulatory function between the artifactual world and man's social environment. Regulation within the social environment is a function equally maintained. It is this activity which brings forth Sorokin's greatest criticism of government in regard to community organization.² The character of community organization is

¹Sylvia Fava, "Suburbanism as a Way of Life," American Sociological Review (February, 1956), pp. 34-37.

²Sorokin, p. 69.

expressed by how a government functions in regards to problems of urbanization. Therefore, one must formulate a theory of the proper role of government before entering upon an analysis of the function of charter township government in Chapter IV.

An analysis of our American political heritage is a necessary prelude to the formulation of a theory of democratic government.

The Basis for Democratic Government

American local government, often attributed to a Jeffersonian ideal of self-determination, owes its existence to the European political philosophers of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. From men such as John Locke, Jean Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill, American democracy received its foundation, reflected in the thought of various authors up to the present day.

Our political heritage is founded upon the exaltation of the common man and his relation to the organization of government; which, according to Locke, was created by man to handle certain activities that man could not accomplish alone. According to Locke, government is obliged not to interfere with certain natural rights of man. Should government transgress upon these rights, man should be able to dissolve the government in anticipation of more amenable forms. This concept of

government at the will of the government at the will of the governed was expanded in Rousseau's social contract theory.¹

Rousseau visualized government as existing was described as an agreement not to violate the principal rights of man which were expressed as the General Will. This general will, often equated by modern theorists to a conception of the public interest, acted as Rousseau's mandate to rule. Rousseau explained that though government could interpret the public interest, and act in its behalf through virtue of the social contract, the final repository for judgment of a government's actions was the power to formulate the public interest. The government held the power of its implementation. Rousseau realized that government may, through malice or other cause, misinterpret the public interest. Given this circumstance, Rousseau joined Locke in claiming the power of the citizenry to dissolve the government whenever it overstepped its bounds. Likewise, though the majority of the citizenry expressed the public interest, only the totality of the populace could act in its formulation. Hence, Rousseau alluded to the problems of majority rule when he said that society is not an entity in itself but a collection of minorities. Similarly, the government may be construed to be the servant of the people but not

separate from public desires. These desires, according to Rousseau, are the foundation for public participation in government.¹

Mill, drawing on the theories of Locke and Rousseau, more precisely circumscribed the proper role of government in his classic distinction between liberty and authority. Mill begins with the thesis

that the sole end for which mankind is warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection.²

Liberty can only be restricted when the restriction is intended to prevent harm to others or unintentional harm to ourselves. The liberty to commit acts which are other-regarding may be inhibited while acts which are specifically and intentionally self-regarding can never be prohibited.

As a champion for minority rights, Mill advocated representative government though he feared the tyranny of the majority and the standardizing pressure toward public conformity. As a result, although Mill never discussed federalism, he indicated the need for the separation of governmental activities in many of his writings.³

¹Ibid., pp. 575-596.

²John Stuart Mill, On Liberty in Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government (London: Dent, 1910), pp. 72-73.

³Sabine, pp. 665-668.

The American democratic heritage, certainly not the direct result of any one of these theorists, has evolved as an eclectic of various theories. Locke, Rousseau, and Mill represent three basic foundations in the development of modern democratic theory--a theory difficult yet necessary to define.

Formulating a Theory of Democratic Government

In considering the difficulties in explicating a theory of democracy, one should realize man's total involvement in an economic, political, and social system in which certain basic objectives are fulfilled. These objectives are: equality, representative government chosen by election, protection of basic rights, popular participation, and mass education. These objectives are fulfilled in the manner of our American democratic system.

American democratic theory is founded upon the concept of equality. This term is interpreted to mean equality of opportunity, or that form of society in which every man has a chance and knows he has it. To obtain equality, the people must be able to express their desires and needs through chosen representatives. This requires a system of election so that government is representative of a majority of all. To ease the imbalance of the majority over the minority, a democracy must enumerate and provide basic freedoms and rights

for the protection of the minority. This does not mean that there will be dead-level equality; it implies that every man adjusts to his proper place like players on a baseball team. Fraternity, rather than absolute equality, is the result. A result of fraternity is that all men participate in it and so do not play passive roles as they might under a monarchy or oligarchy. The intelligent cooperation of the citizens rests upon their social sense and not upon fear of coercion. Therefore, democracy is a social, ethical concept which pervades everyone's life. By this individual aspect, democracy seeks to recognize the personality of each man to shape society agreeable to all.

Perhaps this is somewhat idealistic, but it seems to be a worthwhile goal. This exaltation of the common man has required democratic government to continually educate the masses. This stewardship formula has required our government to be more than government of the people, by the people, and for the people but a government to the people. That is to say, the twentieth century welfare state has become that power of government to do the job that has to be done.

Democracy, then, in its highest and purest forms recognizes the needs of every individual. This is responsible government, and one towards which we all must strive. Township government, by its early form, recognized the necessity for personalizing government.

However, as governmental systems evolve to more urban-oriented forms, the possibilities for interpersonal relations tends to decrease. This danger of growing bureaucracy may be seen within townships as well as other forms of government. The swell of bureaucracy typifies Sokolow's analysis of the evolution of rural to urban governments. He points out that the chief distinction separating urban from rural is the form which government assumes.

The State of Michigan realized the necessity for a separate form of local government to be able to cope with the problems of physical development as well as with the divergencies of a heterogenous social system. Hence, the adaptability of the two forms of township government to rural and urban development was assured through the Charter Township Act. This adaptability is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Summary

The historical development of Meridian Township has resulted largely from the spin-off of growth in adjacent communities. As early as 1848, dominance in the region was captured by Lansing, although Meridian Township contained the earliest settlement in the region. By the turn of the century, patterns of future development in Meridian were struck with the incorporation of East Lansing. Following World War I, East

Lansing, and to a lesser degree Meridian, became dormitory communities for the well-to-do of Lansing. Following World War II, Meridian no longer depended upon spill-over development from East Lansing but was able to attract development on its own in the interior of the township. This development set Meridian apart from the historical pattern of regional subdominance.

Meridian, like many other communities during the last twenty years, became caught in the problems of rapid suburban development. There developed a growing schism in the community's population between the older established residents and new subdivision dwellers. More of a state of mind than an actual occurrence, development in Meridian Township during the early 1950's was still overruled by rural interests, making an identification of the beginning point of urban dominance quite difficult. In fact,

despite the ubiquity and convenience of the dichotomous classification, urban vs. rural, most students of urbanism have long agreed that it is but a crude device at best.¹

Thus, with any attempt to analyze development at a particular stage, on the rural-urban continuum, certain

¹Paul K. Hatt and Albert J. Reiss, Jr., Cities and Society (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), p. 35.

difficulties must be assumed. According to Sorokin:

In reality the transition from a purely rural community to an urban one . . . is not abrupt but gradual . . . There is no absolute boundary line which would show a clearly cut cleavage between the rural and the urban community.¹

However, when viewing the change on the rural-urban continuum from a point later in time; it is not impossible to isolate trends which tend to illustrate concomitant changes in a population's attitudes. Attitudes are an expression of a community's vested interests. Thus, as the community's dependency upon outside interests increases so changes the community attitude and social makeup.

Meridian Township's response to these pressures was twofold. In October of 1957, the Township Zoning Board recommended to the Township Board the formation of a lay planning commission. In December of that year, Meridian's first planning commission was established. Secondly, Meridian applied for, and was granted, charter status on December 14, 1959; making Meridian the second township to operate under charter status in Michigan.

¹Pitirim Sorokin and Carle C. Zimmerman, Principles of Rural-Urban Society (New York: Henry Holt, 1929), p. 14.

CHAPTER III

TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT

Introduction

Various degrees of urbanization necessitate different forms of local government to satisfy citizen demands. In Michigan, the township is the usual government of the rural areas where the charter township is more adaptable to the needs of semi-urban areas. Though these two forms of government share the name "township", they are as unlike in function as villages and cities. Hence, an analysis of the legal qualities of each is necessary to understand the functions of each. Through an examination of form of charter townships, one may gain insight into both the legislative intent and the actual potential of charter townships to develop as transitional governments. Thus, an analysis of form is a prerequisite to a discussion of the function of charter townships in Chapter IV.

Forms of Township Government

During the ensuing 140 years since the creation of the Michigan township, there have been few significant changes in its organization. The Township Board was created by an act of the Territorial Council in 1830 for

the purpose of licensing taverns and regulating their operations. By 1850 the powers and duties of the members of the Board were broadened by the Michigan Consitution as follows: property assessment for taxation was the duty of the Supervisor; tax computation and general bookkeeping was the duty of the Clerk; tax collection and fiscal management was the duty of the Treasurer; and two justices of the peace were responsible for maintaining the peace through the enforcement of township ordinances.¹

The Township Board consisted of five members, all of whom submitted to partisan elections on a yearly basis. These officers met in the spring of each year, together with any interested citizens who wished a voice in government, to administer the affairs of the township. Organization remained relatively the same until 1909 when minor changes were made by the State, granting township officials more leeway in the execution of their duties. However, townships evercise their powers and duties only to the extent that they are permitted through enabling legislation.

¹Claude R. Thorp, A Manual for Township Government in Michigan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1948), pp. 3-5.

Contrary to the opinions of such great jurists as Thomas M. Cooley, townships remain wards of the State.¹

In 1943 terms of township officials were extended from one to two years. Of greater significance was the Charter Township Act of 1948 which was the greatest change in Michigan local government since the Constitution of 1850. The Charter Township Act provided the option for townships (hereafter referred to as general law townships) to submit to the electors a proposition of charter status if it has population of 2,000 or more and is contiguous to a city of at least 25,000; or if it has a population of at least 5,000 people. The Charter Township Act also removed the two Justices of the Peace from the Township Board replacing them with two Trustees elected at large, within the township. The Township Board may elect to have the Supervisor appoint an additional two Trustees bringing the total membership of the Township Board to seven. Another option open to the Township Board considering charter status is the addition of a Township Superintendent (a city manager for township affairs) to relieve some of the pressures from the Township Supervisor. Thus, the Charter Township Act of 1948 attempted to modernize the role of

¹James and Marilyn Blawie, The Michigan Township Board: Its Powers and Duties (East Lansing: Governmental Research Bureau, M.S.U., 1957), pp. 7.

local government, to keep the form of government responsive to increasing demands for higher degrees of service and local control over local affairs.¹ Just how far this control extends is the subject of the following section.

Powers and Duties

Perhaps the most significant difference between the two forms of township government is due to differing powers with regard to taxing, borrowing, and planning.

Taxation

The general law township, bound by what has traditionally become known as the "15-mill limitation", differs from the charter township which has no overall limitation. More explicitly the general law township, after assessing the total value of the township, submits to the County Allocation Board a request for operating funds to be divided among the county, the school districts, special education, and township operations. Based on expressed need, the County Allocation Board allocates millage upon the assessed valuation if the total request for all millage purposes does not exceed 15 mills of assessed valuation as equalized by the State. (S.E.V.) An additional three mills can be voted by the

¹Hotaling, pp. 1-6.

electors for a period of not more than twenty years, raising the total operating millage ceiling to 18 mills of State Equalized Valuation.

More often than not,

townships have not fared very well under the 15-mill limitation. Because of the demands of other units of government, especially school districts, the amount of property taxes levied by township (for townships' operating purposes) rarely exceeds three mills and frequently is one mill or less.¹

In order to circumvent this problem, the Charter Township Act permits a charter township to levy up to 5 mills of State Equalized Valuation without vote of the electors. The electors of the township may vote additional millage above 5 mills not to exceed a total of 10 mills of S.E.V. for additional operating expenses. Consequently, charter townships are given a broader fiscal base upon which to expand the operations of government.

Special Assessments

Other sources of revenue include the township's ability to raise money by special assessment procedures which are governed by the Township and Village Public Improvement Act. (M.C.L. s 41.411-41.414, M.S.A. 52411-52414) Both forms of government are equally subject to

¹Kenneth Verburg, A Study of the Legal Powers of Michigan Local Governments (East Lansing: Institute for Community Development, 1960), p. 23.

the provisions of this law which allows townships to levy special assessments to provide garbage and sewage disposal plants, water facilities, public lighting, public transportation, streets and sidewalks, and other public facilities. In order to qualify under the Act, a system of benefits received must be computed. The cost of these improvements must be paid out of special assessments to benefiting property owners given that 65 per cent of these freeholders have signed a petition requesting the public improvement. Special assessments may not exceed 150 mills with a total for all special assessment millage not to exceed 450 mills of S.E.V. These assessments may not be spread over more than ten annual payments for streets; thirty payments for water and sewer mains; and forty for water and sewer facilities.

The Township and Village Public Improvement Act has been an important constraint upon tempering the eagerness of general law townships to finance all types of improvements by special assessment. It has prevented many townships from going over their financial heads, as,

the limitation on special assessments is an important matter since general law townships do not have broad powers of taxation. They are perhaps more dependent upon special assessments than are cities because many public improvements in a township are of a less general benefit than they might be in cities. Public improvements in townships tend to be of a special rather than general benefit because of the degree of urbanization differs widely from one area to another, whereas in cities, the pattern of urbanization

is more compact and the effect of many public improvements is general rather than special.¹

State Shared Taxes

In recent years, the principal source of revenue for township expenditures has been decreasingly dependent upon property taxation and increasingly reliant upon state returned taxes. Since 1957 shared taxes have accounted for two thirds of all township monies.² These monies include a share of the State sales tax receipts. By the constitution, townships are assured at least 1/2 of 1 per cent of each sales tax dollar collected or 1/4 per cent return on all sales. These monies are distributed to all local units of government by the county based on the local units' percentage of total county population. These monies are receivable into the township's general fund. With the recent enactment of the State income tax, township general funds have enjoyed an additional boost in revenue, usually second only to sales tax receipts. These monies are also distributed to township general funds on the basis of the last decennial census. Intangibles tax returns, which make up the smallest portion

¹Ibid., p. 25.

²A.L. Edwards, A Study of Local Government Debt in Michigan (East Lansing: Institute for Community Development, 1960), p. 33.

of State shared taxes, also go into the general fund. These receipts are distributed equally to all units of local government based on population.

Shared taxes with receipts earmarked for particular purposes include the liquor license fees which are 85 per cent returned to the township for use in financing police departments. General law townships are not permitted to operate police departments, and justices of the peace are not considered to be law enforcement officers. Therefore, general law townships are not eligible for these funds. Charter townships do qualify, however, for their share of the monies. Other shared monies include parimutual funds, public utility taxes, and cigarette and tobacco taxes all earmarked for particular uses.

Townships may resort to their ability to impose fines for violations of adopted ordinances and to collect fees for permits of various kinds in order to complete their treasuries. By law maximum fines and penalties may not exceed \$100 for the violation of any township ordinance. Justices of the peace in general law townships must turn over to the county clerk the total of all fines collected, while charter townships are permitted to retain these receipts in their general funds. Monies received through the sale of permits are retained in the general funds of both forms of township government.

Bonding

In the area of bonding, the differences between general law and charter townships are not as significant as the constraints upon taxation.

It should be noted, however, that consideration of bonding should not be separated from consideration of general taxing powers. Perhaps it is not so much the bonding and debt limits which hamper the activity of townships as it is the lack of power and authority to levy taxes to repay the bonds.¹

Because of this, general law townships rarely approach legal debt ceilings with regard to general obligation bonds (G.O. Bonds). These bonds are payable out of the general fund and guaranteed by the full faith and credit of the township. Consequently, bond underwriters are also apt to charge high rates of interest when adequate fiscal responsibilities cannot be guaranteed.

Charter townships, having a broader base for taxation, may issue up to 10 per cent of their S.E.V. in G.O. Bonds as long as payments do not exceed 30 mills of S.E.V. in any one year unless authorized by the electorate. G.O. Bonds may be authorized by the Township Board without a vote of the citizenry.

Bonds to be repaid by special assessments for public improvements may be one of two kinds. The most common bond is that which is guaranteed by the full

¹Verburg, p. 27.

faith and credit of the township, making the township liable for the collection of the special assessments. The second variety makes the assessed property owner liable for repayment. This form of bonding is most difficult to write and this, in conjunction with exceedingly high interest rates, makes it quite unpopular.

Generally, G.O. debt in Michigan is declining as a percentage of long term debt when compared to that of the United States. In addition, "G.O. debt financing has not been an important revenue producer for Michigan local governments."¹

The remedy for what would seem to be the unavailability of bonding for general law townships is the Revenue Bond. This bond differs from the G.O. Bond in that the guarantee of repayment is assured through the revenue producing ability of a public improvement. The attractiveness of the Revenue Bond to a municipality with a poor credit rating is also enhanced by the fact that Revenue Bonds allow improvements to pay for themselves, costing the municipalities next to nothing.

The Revenue Bond Act of 1933 states that townships may issue Revenue Bonds without vote for sewer and water and other similar projects. (M.C.L. ss 141.101-141.136, M.S.A. ss 5.2731-5.2766) The bonds must pay at least on

¹Edwards, p. 11.

a yearly basis with the first payment due not more than five years after completion of the project. Payments must be made on both the principal and the interest; sinking funds are not legal issue according to the Act. Payments may not be spread over more than forty years. The Charter Township Act further expanded the list of projects which may be financed through revenue bonds by including housing facilities; garbage, rubbish and sewage disposal plants; incinerators; public markets; bridges; ferries; yacht basins; harbors; docks and wharfs; community buildings; parks and recreation facilities; parking facilities; airports; and reforestation projects.

Although revenue bonds are still a popular issue, they are losing ground in the area of small project financing due to several factors. Revenue bonds command higher rates of interest than G.O. Bonds. By the early 1960's, many townships and villages in Michigan had received charter or incorporated status giving them better credit ratings in the G.O. Bond market. Secondly, there is an increasing tendency on the part of local governmental officials to make the general taxpayer legally responsible for indebtedness incurred and not to trust the revenue producing capability of small public improvements. In the area of larger capital improvements, the revenue bond is usually preferred. It is felt

that current taxpayers should not bear the full burden for the development of a long term project which will be of greater benefit to future generations and possibly non-taxpayers from outside the community. In addition, bonds for larger projects are easier to market as their revenue producing potential is usually unquestionable.

Planning and Zoning

The power to zone by township boards, with particular regard to dangerous or offensive nuisances, predates the first official enabling legislation by twenty-six years. This opinion of the State Attorney General has never been tested.¹ To date, there are three primary statutes involved with regard to township planning and zoning. They are, as amended:

1. Act 285 of 1931 (Sec. 5.2991 MSA) - City, Village, and Municipal Planning Act.
2. Act 184 of 1943 (Sec. 5.2963 (1) MSA) - Township Rural Zoning Act.
3. Act 168 of 1959 (Sec. 5.2963 (101) - Township Planning Act.

Under Act 184 townships are empowered to establish zoning boards which are solely advisory to the township board. Their powers extend only as far as zoning. Any planning must be accomplished by the township board because independent lay planning commissions (permitted

¹Blawie, p. 47.

for cities and villages under the 1931 act) were denied to general law townships.

In 1952 the Municipal Planning Act was amended to include townships and charter townships, granting them equal powers with cities to establish their own nine member lay planning commissions. Some of the major powers and duties granted to planning commission under this Act are to:

1. Appoint such employees as it may deem necessary for its work, and to contract with planners, engineers, architects, and other consultants as it may require;
2. Make and adopt a master plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside of its boundaries which, in the commission's judgment, bear relation to the planning of such municipality;
3. After the adoption of the master plan, approve or disapprove the construction of any street, square, park, or public way, ground or open space, or public building or structure;
4. Prepare coordinated and comprehensive programs of public structures and improvements, and annually prepare such a program for the ensuing six years, which programs shall show those public structures and improvements, in the general order of their priority, which in the commission's judgment will be needed or desirable and can be undertaken within the six year period;
5. Employ means of publicity and education of promote public interest in and understanding of the plan;
6. Have all powers heretofore granted to the zoning board of the municipality; and,
7. Adopt regulations governing the subdivision of land within its jurisdiction.

One important aspect of this Act, although frequently overlooked, is Item 3 - the review function of the planning commission. Various departments within some municipalities plan, purchase, and sell property, and generally duplicate the work of other departments when no effort at coordination among governmental agencies is attempted. The planning office is the logical place to function as a clearinghouse for all development information, and as such, can indicate appropriate lines of action which are in conformance with the adopted development plan.

Another good feature of the Act with regard to the implementation of the development plan is the requirement that the planning commission shall communicate its reasons to the township board for denial of development proposals. The board, then, may overrule by a two thirds vote. This feature guards against arbitrary judgments by the planning commission. Although similar judgments can also be reached by the township board; at least they are the elected representatives of the people and must answer to their constituents. Thus, the law provides for the planning function within local government where the need has always existed. Yet, the Act is also careful in designing a means for checks and balances to keep planning within its proper role. Act 285 has gained the reputation of doing just this.

Act 168 of 1959 removed whatever doubt might have existed since 1952 that general law townships could be included in the provisions of the 1931 Act. Act 168 represented a radical departure from the City Planning Act of 1931. It refers specifically to general law townships and cuts to a great extent the planning power previously granted to general law township planning commissions.

Chapter Summary

Basically, then, these are the two forms of township government which exist in the State of Michigan. Regarding township government, Professor Brake has noted that

the Michigan Township is a transitional form of local government in many respects and for this reason has been of considerable value under certain local conditions. Traditionally, it was designed to take care of the needs of rural areas. New townships lying on the fringes of large cities have been adapted through legislative acts to the needs of suburbanites. Some students regard the township as mainly a half-way house to urban status.¹

Although Professor Brake generously includes the general law township within the category of transitional governmental forms, the charter township alone more accurately qualifies. The general law township remains as a limited effort on the part of rural interests to

¹Hale D. Brake, The Michigan Township (East Lansing: Institute for Community Development, 1962), p. 1.

provide the lowest semblance of organizational structure. Conversely, the charter township induces a broader governmental structure with expanded powers to tax and to plan. These two characteristics of township government, possibly the most important functions of any level of government, reveal the potential for a community's response to the pressures of urbanization. The power to tax provides government with the ability to assume needed programs while the ability to plan assures their efficient and equitable implementation. Thus, when one is concerned with the function of charter township government, an analysis of the planning process provides a valid approach.

It is difficult to weight the impact of planning upon determining the existing pattern of land development. It is equally difficult to envision the form that a township could assume given that no planning occurs. Nevertheless, township planning has been criticized more for what it has not done than for what it has done. It has been labeled the patron of the developer, a devil's advocate for destroying the environment that oldtimers in the community wish to preserve. As seen by the land developer, the newcomer, and land owner turned potential land broker, the lay planning commission is stodgily conservative. It is with these two faces that the planning commission sits as unpaid

servants to the public, mediating the problems of development. The following chapter will investigate planning in Meridian Township with the aim of determining why the planning function has proven detrimental to charter township's transitional intent.

CHAPTER IV

PLANNING IN MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP

Introduction

Ideally planners should endeavor to consider every possible facet of a particular problem before rendering a decision. This attitude has come to be known as the comprehensive approach; and one which tends to distinguish planners from other administrators. However, the planning function in government does consist of both administrative and comprehensive activities. Perloff explains these compatible but separate activities.

One stream of development in the city planning field has been more or less typically professional in character; that is, the evolution of a separate professional skill group . . . here, a skill group concerned with shaping and guiding the physical growth and land use arrangements of urban communities, through making and applying comprehensive plans and designs covering the location of various types of public and private improvements . . . The other stream of development . . . has been the evolution of an administrative function of planning within municipal government. This has been essentially a staff advisory function.¹

¹Harvey S. Perloff, Education for Planning: City State and Regional, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1957), pp. 6-8.

The development of the planning function in Meridian Township may be compared to what Perloff has described as the "professional skill group" concerned with comprehensive planning. Perhaps it was overly professional. The township board recommended that a more representative cross-section of the community could be obtained with fewer educators and professional planners! Nevertheless, the changing function of the planning commission from the "professional skill group" category concerned with comprehensive long-range planning to short-range functions concerned with administration of zoning regulations is significant, and has resulted in the failure of charter townships to respond to the wishes of the citizenry. Within this chapter, I examine the decline of the comprehensive function of township planning as promoting the failure of charter township government to realize its transitional role.

The chapter traces the growth and development of Meridian's planning activities, closing with suggestions for a new role for planning. This role, which may also be applied to charter township government in general, calls for a more responsive attitude on the part of government to the wishes of the public. These wishes, abridged in the application of ordinances and plans is

indicative of the need for a more comprehensive approach to the process of urbanization.

Factors Initiating Meridian Township's
Planning Commission

According to the "Meridian News" at the time of commission formation, "The creation of a planning commission for Meridian Township is already five years late."¹ However, as of December, 1957, only one other township in the State had established a planning commission under the provision of Act 285. The position taken by the "Meridian News" must be assumed to refer to the existence of local problems of such a serious nature that planning had been needed for quite some time. And indeed it had!

Problems

Under the provisions of Act 184, Meridian Township established its first zoning ordinance in 1948. Not unlike other communities' first attempts at land use regulation, the content of Meridian's ordinance sought to limit development rather than regulate growth. It was not uncommon in those days for local residents to receive preferential treatment in the granting of variances and rezonings while petitioners

¹Meridian News (Ingham County, Michigan), December 5, 1957, p. 1.

from outside of the community encountered serious opposition.¹ Administration of the zoning ordinance was executed in an equally selective manner.

Zoning was viewed as an extension of the building code which applied to site design. As long as no detrimental consequences of a particular development were obvious, a petitioner usually had little trouble before the zoning board.

Detrimental consequences of the future, if they became known at all, were of little concern. This attitude was not a reflection of the community's apathy. Rather, it was a result of the inability to visualize the future of the community. Consequently, the township was rezoned, spot by spot, largely contributing to initiating the patterns of developing existing today.

Meridian Township officials became aware of the dilemma of unplanned growth when the Ingham County Health Department reported in June of 1957 that the Township was approaching a situation of overdevelopment with regard to the ability of the soils to accept more septic tank effluent. Recent tests by the County had indicated that an outbreak of hepatitis was possible unless the Township could seek measures to better dispose of sanitary wastes. The situation

¹Ibid., December 19, 1957, p. 1.

was not to approach critical proportions, however, until 1959 when the County refused to accept any more plats without sanitary sewer hook-ups. In the meantime, the Township officials became aware of the repercussions of unplanned growth.

Fiscal problems facing the Township during the 1950's were also instrumental in illustrating the need for planning. The rapid growth experienced by the Township between 1950 and 1960 was almost entirely in single family residential development. As a result, the demand upon the community's services increased faster than the ability of this type of development to add a proportional amount to the tax base. Consequently, the Township fell behind in its payments to the County for drain improvements which, at this time, were assessed against the Township at large.

In an effort to meet the increased costs of government, the Township Supervisor ordered a reassessment of the entire Township. The effect was colossal. Immediately, a citizen's group organized to consider the feasibility of incorporating Okemos as a city. It was their belief, that the direction of the Township was one of disaster; and that they, as a separate government entity, could receive greater benefits from the tax dollar than under the current arrangements.¹ The

¹Ibid., March 13, 1958, p.1.

situation was further worsened in the autumn of 1957 when the residents of the Marble School District sought annexation to the City of East Lansing. At that time, the Marble area comprised 27 per cent of the Township's assessed valuation. Figure 5 in the appendix illustrates the annexation areas.

In response to the threat of annexation, the possible incorporation of Okemos, and the deteriorating financial situation, another citizens' group was formed to discuss the possibility of the incorporation of the City of Meridian. Hopes were dashed following the successful vote on the Marble School District annexation. This loss of land placed Meridian below the minimum population necessary for city incorporation under State law.

Further expressions of disappointment over the inability of Township government to plan for its future resulted in the formation of other citizen groups. They were concerned with such problems as cleaning up Lake Lansing, planning for parks and schools, and establishing a method for obtaining sanitary sewer service. Although they met quite infrequently, these groups may be identified as the predecessors of an official Township planning commission. Walker explains the evolution of interest groups to institutionalized forms of an example of the "Theory of Functional

Accretion." He describes the process as consisting of four essential steps in which government assumes a needed community function - in this instance, planning.

1. New services and activities are developed outside government by private organizations.
2. These organizations, aided by supporting groups and prominent individuals, bring pressure to bear on government to take over and finance the service.
3. When first taken over by government, the new services are generally administered by an autonomous or semi-autonomous board.
4. Most of these services are later integrated with other governmental activities and deprived of their initial autonomy.¹

The Theory of Functional Accretion may prove valid for explaining the evolution of planning in Meridian Township. The theory is also of value for an explanation of planning's reaction to the pressures of an urbanizing area. These activities are typified by the necessity for the planner to spend more time on the day-to-day problems of administering development. As the political unit grows, the autonomy of the planning board decreases due to its close interrelationship with gormalized government. Subdivision regulations, zoning ordinances, and land use plans provide the link between government

¹For an elaboration, see Luther Gulick, "Notes on the Theory of Organization," in Luther Gulick and L. Urwick, "Papers on the Science of Administration," (New York: Columbia University Institute of Public Administration, 1937).

and the autonomous board. At the point where the planning commission activities are indistinguishable from governmental policy, Walker's final stage of group integration is reached. The following section considers the implications of the loss of planning autonomy as attributed to the failure of charter townships to instigate the desire for more urbanized forms of government.

Meridian's Planning Activities

According to Township Supervisor McClure, "the rapid growth and changing status of Meridian Township from a rural to an urbanized community has created the urgent need for an up-to-date program of general township planning."¹ He further outlined the more serious problems the new planning commission would have to face:

1. School districts are planning on their own without regard to the township as a whole resulting in excessively high school taxes and duplication of services.
2. Zoning at present is entirely based upon individual desires. A new rationale must be devised.
3. Alternatives to unchecked residential growth must be sought to supplement the tax base. Such alternatives could be in the form of industrialization which can be designed to be architecturally appealing.
4. More attention needs to be given to the encouragement of aesthetically pleasing

¹Meridian News, November 14, 1957, pp. 1-2.

surroundings while discouraging the mixing of incompatible land uses.

5. To prevent losses to future annexation, the planning commission must devise methods by which the residents may be supplied with a higher level of urbanized services than they could receive through annexation to East Lansing.¹

Meridian's new planning commission held its first meeting on February 7, 1958 and established four committees aimed at the most pressing problems confronting the Township. They were:

1. Master Planning Committee
2. Zoning Committee
3. Platting Committee
4. Capital Development Committee

The composition of the planning commission was by no means typical of other suburban communities. In fact, the high proportion of educators and planners attests to the influence of the University in molding the composition of the newcomer population. As a result, Meridian Township was fortunate in achieving a competent commission from the very beginning--a composition which many communities never equal.

By the summer of 1958, Meridian had its first parttime planning staff which was responsible for collecting and analyzing data, and preparing the

¹Ibid., October 31, 1957, pp. 1-2.

necessary base maps and graphics for developing a Township master plan. The Township Board had allocated \$4,400 for financing these activities.

In early January 1959, the problems which had instigated the formation of the planning commission reached crucial proportions. During that month, the planning commission was informed by the Ingham County Health Department that no further residential platting would be permitted without sanitary sewers. Construction ground to a halt. Meridian Township officials were also informed by Ingham County that the Township was so far behind in drainage assessments that sales tax and other State shared taxes distributed by the County would be held in lieu of a payment on the outstanding debt.¹

The planning commission, realizing that it would be impossible for the Township to sell any G.O. Bonds for financing a central sanitary sewer system with the drain debt outstanding, sought another approach. They suggested that the Township incorporate as a charter township for several reasons:

1. Meridian needed greater taxing powers to pay past debts.

¹Unpublished minutes of the Meridian Charter Township Governmental Study Committee, June 12, 1968.

2. Chartering would enable the Township to obtain better interest rates to finance a central sanitary sewer system.
3. Recent annexation and the threat of future annexation had indicated a growing dissatisfaction among the citizenry with current Township government.
4. The inability of the residents of Okemos to identify with the rural-oriented Township had resulted in the formation of a citizen group favoring the incorporation of Okemos as a separate political entity.
5. Other interest groups favored other forms of fractionalizing the Township. Among them were proposals to incorporate all of Meridian as a city while at the other extreme was the proposal to incorporate only the urbanized areas.
6. The impact of the suburban migration during the 1950's was being felt to a greater degree each year. Newcomers' demands for more urban services fell upon apathetic township officials who were not financially to finance public improvements. Confrontations over school expansions were equally illustrative. In 1957 and 1958, a \$3.5 million proposal for the Okemos School Plant additions was defeated twice before passing on a third attempt after the proposed budget had been cut by an amazing 46 per cent.¹

With the election of a Republican supervisor in May of 1959, the proposal for chartering gained additional public support. Supervisor Robinson, defeating Democrat McClure, actively pursued a \$1.5 million central sanitary sewer network which would provide service to all portions of the urbanized Township. That

¹Gary W. King, Walter E. Freeman, and Christopher Sower, Conflict over Schools: Sociological Analysis of a Suburban School Bond Election (East Lansing: Institute for Community Development, 1963), p. 10.

November, the electors of Meridian Township handily certified charter status.

By 1960 most of the fiscal problems which had plagued the Township had been alleviated. With the County's allocation of an additional two mills for operating expenses and the redistribution of State shared taxes based upon the 1960 census, Meridian was able to pay off its drain debts to the County. The financial picture was good, but would be better if the Township had a new zoning ordinance based upon zoning districts rather than zoning uses.

On Tuesday, October 4, 1960, Ordinance No. 22 was adopted by the Township Board in order to obtain a better break on the interest rates of the upcoming sewer bonding. However, with the expedient, there is often the innovative. Meridian's ordinance was to prove itself a questionable experiment in zoning - an ordinance quite unlike any other in the metropolitan area.

The Use and Misuse of Zoning

Two items distinguished the new zoning ordinance from the old one. They were:

1. Zoning of the entire Township by districts as opposed to zoning by uses.
2. The incorporation of a special use provision into most districts which would necessitate

site plan approval by the planning commission before certain uses would be permitted within a district.

The first item of change was a direct result of Meridian's bad experience with the effects of spot zoning. District zoning, by setting out districts ahead of time, could feasibly allow the community to develop as planned. Rezoning then, if in conformance with a development plan, would not be spot zoning; while changes of use permitted in a zone would not require rezoning. Item Number 2 became necessary to insure that these changes in use did not escape formal regulation by the Township. Secondly, the special use permit was mandatory to insure the viability of the zoning plan for no one could really tell for sure that those districts proposed in 1960 would be valid in the future.

The Special Use Permit

Cunningham illustrates the justification of the special use permit,

In order to escape the stigma of spot zoning and to combine flexibility with comprehensive planning . . . Unfortunately, however, not all zoning ordinances which provide for special exceptions set forth in any detail the standards which are to guide the board of adjustment in granting special exceptions.¹

¹Roger A. Cunningham, "The State and Local Problems," Iowa Law Review No. 2 (Winter 1965), pp. 399-400.

Thus, the argument is that the special use permit is but a safety valve for unanticipated development; which, though different than spot zoning, achieves the very same thing. He further explains that

the consequence of all this has been that the "Euclidean" system of dividing the community into districts based on the principle of compatibility has more and more tended to break down. An increasingly complex urban community requires particularized adjustments among competing land uses which cannot always be made in advance. The problem is to find techniques for making the necessary adjustments as individual cases arise. And the problem is a two-pronged one. On one hand, the crudities of a priori classification have increased the number of cases where rezoning of relatively small parcels of land must be sought. On the other hand, traditional "Euclidean" zoning techniques have been hard to apply in large tracts. On the urban fringe, in areas just becoming ripe for urban development, territorial division into use districts may be especially different.¹

The special use permit was viewed as a welcome relief by those in Meridian who had clearly experienced the helplessness of Township government under the old ordinance. Though there was some reticence on the part of the community toward the concept of district zoning, especially among those older residents with large land holdings, the general feeling was that special use permits would personalize the law by permitting government a greater say in the process of land development. As such, it softened the impact of zoning by districts.

¹Ibid., pp. 395-396.

Still, there were objections from those individuals who felt their property had been "zoned down" from a potential they could have achieved under the old ordinance. The arbitrariness of some boundaries was shown and changes were made accordingly. Meridian's planners took extra effort to win support for the new ordinance.¹

The ordinance was not unreasonable; in most cases, district boundaries encompassed previous uses of the same type. No undue hardship was placed upon any property owner if it could not be justified on the basis of the best interests of the community. The best interests of the community were graphically depicted on a future land use plan. This map, though unadopted by the Township Board, served as the justification for commission action until 1964 when the Township Board adopted a Plan for Parks and Recreation, which included a proposed development plan. Figure 6 in the appendix contains a reproduction of the development plan.

During the mid 1960's, the commission's strict adherence to the letter of the ordinance was commendable. Under the special use permit provision the Township's segregated housing supply was broadened to include a greater share of rental units for lower income classes.

¹Meridian Charter Township Planning Commission, Minutes of Planning Commission Meetings, August 18, 1960 to June 26, 1961. (Mimeographed).

Students generally filled these units; and, as their numbers grew, oldtimers and newcomers tended to find common ground in their dislike of student housing.¹ The planning commission reacted with tightened controls and more extensive use of the site plan approval powers of the special use permit. Control was not excessive, however, as the planning commission realized that apartment construction was bailing out the depleting tax base from the effects of excessive single family construction. The special use permit was being used as intended.

Although the zoning ordinance had endured several revisions by the late 1960's, it became obvious that a major overhaul would be needed. Many of the zones projected for future use never got started. Though land need was calculated through projections in population, the commission erred in projecting the pattern of growth. By 1969 three blatant inconsistencies became obvious.

Overzoning

The wide swath of industrially zoned land paralleling the Grand Trunk Railroad between Haslett and Okemos was not less unbuildable than in 1960. The area suffered from poor accessibility, poor soils,

¹Ibid., August 19, 1964.

and poor planning. Largely to pacify the Haslett School District in 1960, this large portion of land was zoned with the zoning of similar land in the Okemos School District.

Incorrect Zoning

The 1960 ordinance made large areas of single family housing in Haslett non-conforming when zoned for multiple use only. The theory of the commission was that this area was deteriorating and making the worst areas non-conforming would accomplish urban renewal at a cost of nothing to the Township. Pressures for rebuilding have been strong; consequently, they commission has found it necessary to reconsider the feasibility of this zoning.

Illegal Zoning--The Misuse of the Special Use Permit

Perhaps the most serious misuse of zoning ordinance involves the illegal broadening of the scope of the special use permit. Following the rezoning of the Meridian Mall property in 1966 (See Figure 5, Meridian Township, in Appendix) for a \$20 million regional shopping facility, the desirability of smaller dispersed shopping areas came to be questioned. Further commercial zoning would tend to encourage strip development along Grand River Avenue. Even though the Mall represented a policy of

containment of commercial uses, its location in a relatively undeveloped area along a major thoroughfare tended to produce the same results. Sokolow discusses this type of development as the "point of multiplication in urbanizing growth where one new urban installation stimulates plans and actions for future growth."¹

Meridian Mall represented a departure in the scale of development that had previously operated in the Township. Following the rezoning, numerous additional plans flooded the commission. Many of these plans were for a scale of development the planners had never imagined. Others were simple requests; but in a time of rapid change, even simple requests bear an element of uncertainty. As a result, the planning commission turned to the special use permit and administratively broadened the context of its meaning. The special use permit became increasingly a device by which to avoid a decision. A decision, it was feared, could possibly be wrong. Thus, it was rationalized, the special use permit should be contingent upon not only the performance of various standards but be subject to the changing attitudes and development of

¹Sokolow, p. 16.

the community as well. In this contest, the special use permit had been prostituted from its original intent.

Case in Point

The Northwestern Law Review indicates that the tendency of a zoning body to engage in a legislative act when a special use permit is granted is the foremost criticism of the permit.¹ An example may well illustrate Meridian's tendency on this point.

Legislation by administration.--In a recent application for a rezoning, a petitioner requested a rezoning to a less intensive commercial use in order to engage in outdoor sales.² The parcel of land in question was located in one of the smaller dispersed shopping areas just off Grand River Avenue about three-quarters of a mile from the Meridian Mall. The rezoning would have had several distinct advantages:

1. It would have reduced the potential for strip development along Grand River Avenue to a lesser degree while phasing out some of the dispersed commercial development.
2. It would have allowed the petitioner more flexibility in the operation of his business.

¹"Flexible Land Use Control: Herein of the Special Use," Northwestern Law Review, Vol. 59, No.3 (July-August), pp. 394-412.

²See Holidays Unlimited Rezoning in Meridian Charter Township Planning Commission Minutes, February to August, 1969.

3. With plantings and shrubs, the petitioner's proposal would have been more aesthetically pleasing to the surrounding neighborhood than requiring all of the outdoor displays to be put under a roof.

However, the rezoning was denied as a request for spot zoning with the suggestion that the petitioner apply for a special use permit. A permit was issued which would effectively negate the rezoning denial (a legislative act of the Township Board) and substitute permission by the planning commission (acting administratively). How far can site plan approval be stretched?

Special use and the floating zone.--Other inconsistencies in Meridian's administration of the special use permit are open to attack. Meridian Township has recently adopted a mobile home park amendment to the zoning ordinance. The provisions of this amendment allow for the development of mobile home parks in those areas zoned for rural residential use. This zone is primarily reserved for the undeveloped portion of the Township which lacks sanitary sewers. By application for a special use permit, developers may propose location for parks given that they can provide sanitary sewer facilities to their site. Thus, the mobile home special use is a floating zone, one which will drop at the discretion of private developments.

Although the courts have declared the floating zone illegal, they have not done so when it is cloaked under the guise of the special use permit. The distinction between the floating zone and the net result of the mobile home special use district is insignificant at best. The distinction is especially difficult to draw in that the residential zone in which mobile home parks are permitted covers over 50 per cent of the grassland area of the Township.

In addition, by allowing other special uses in practically all zones, Meridian has substituted one floating zone for many. Thus, the failure to locate special use districts is multiplied by the number of districts having such provisions. In addition, the concept that districts are located when the boundaries of both are coterminous is false. The smaller the district the more predictable the possible location of permissive uses. The multiplication of special use districts increases this difficulty. An obvious result of this type of administration is to negate the desirability of zoning at all. In this regard, the planning function for determining future patterns of land use no longer rests with the public agency but has gravitated to the realm of the private land owner.

This tendency to relate public decision making to the aims of private development is discussed in the next section.

Meridian's Planning Efforts

Planning may be visualized as an intermediary process between the demands of urbanization and the operation of government. The planning commission, representative of a coalition of public interests at its inception, tends to lose its autonomy due to its proclivity to assume an increasing share of government's administrative tasks. As these duties occupy a greater share of the planner's time, he finds he has fewer hours to spend on comprehensive planning. The following discussion illustrates this state of affairs in Meridian Township.

Necessity and Administrative Planning

The Meridian Township planning commission was formed with the same enthusiasm and gusto as common to most developing regions. Buoyed with the prospects for underwriting the Township's future, the commission believed that the development of a master plan should receive top priority. However, though the commission retained its autonomy from formalized government, it still became the informal workhorse for government in

zoning and subdivision matters. As such, the planning commission became responsible for formulating governmental policy on these questions. Consequently, when Township officials needed a new subdivision ordinance in 1959, they turned to the planning commission for guidance.

Street and Highway Plan

Due to the short time in which the ordinance had to be completed, Meridian's planners were faced with the design of an ordinance without a basis in a master plan. The result was the development of "A Master Plan for Major Streets and Highways", by August 3, 1959. According to the Plan,

the streets and highways plan has been coordinated with a tentative land use plan for the township. This will, in the near future, be presented in the form of a revised zoning ordinance and zoning map for the township . . . To this effect the major streets and highways plan will be used as a basis for establishing more realistic subdivision regulations.¹

Land Use Plan

Expediency with the failure to recognize the distinction between planning and zoning characterize Meridian's first land use plan. Though the planners did develop a tentative land use plan before the

¹"Master Plan for Major Streets and Highways," Meridian Township, Michigan, 1959.

adoption of the new zoning ordinance in 1960, it represented nothing more than a colored map without any written substantiation. Here, too, the commission had yielded to expediency over their professional competency.

The tentative land use plan located public facilities and private development in a geometrical pattern based on the total application of standards without variation for the peculiarities of the Township. Thus, roads in the Streets and Highway Plan were proposed with no real assurance that the future pattern of development would warrant them. According to Goodman:

One common pitfall in preparing transportation objectives is the preoccupation with the effect of accessibility on urban form. A frequently stated objective of the transportation system is to aid the creation of certain urban forms . . . Planners should make certain that the role of the transportation system in creating the desired urban form has not been overstated, otherwise the transportation plan would be prepared for an unattainable urban form--and an unattainable goal.¹

It would seem that Meridian's planners had done just this.

Pragmatism aptly characterizes the early work of the planning commission. Though Perloff would label

¹William I. Goodman, ed. Principles and Practices of Urban Planning (Washington, D.C.: International City Managers Association, 1968), p. 155.

this work as comprehensive planning, the real intent was purely administrative. The administrative intent in a planning document would not appear again until June of 1966. While in the meantime the planning commission enjoyed a brief interlude.

Comprehensive Planning Activities

On December 10, 1962, the planning commission, realizing that the continued development of single family homes would not permit the continued financing of needed community services, sought alternatives to the sagging tax base. They proposed the establishment of research-park facilities. These industrial parks, by attracting only "clean" industry, could relieve some of the tax burden character. Opposition was notable from those older residents of the Township who had known the Township only as a rural area. This attitude was well expressed by one of the many citizens at a public hearing who stated, "I would rather pay higher taxes than have industry."¹

By 1963 the community's attitude was slightly changed. The oldtimers were still opposed to industrial parks, and in the interim had prevented the location of a large complex along the C & O Railroad south of Okemos

¹Meridian Charter Township Planning Commission Minutes, May 22, 1961.

However, a more accommodating attitude was evident in the remark of Howard Cook regarding the rezoning of the Red Cedar Research Park. He said, "I am definitely against the rezoning. I don't want industry in this area although I am not opposed to industry locating elsewhere."¹

The following February the Red Cedar Research Park became a reality, making Meridian Township the first community in the metropolitan area to implement this concept.² The installation of the research park is also significant for the light it sheds upon changing community attitudes toward types of development other than single family residential. It illustrates not so much a change in attitudes but a shift in the degree of influence interest groups wield upon government. Though it is difficult to pick one point in time from which newcomer influence would continue to dominate the old; it may be valid to conclude that this change was a gradual one, and one that would become more evident in subsequent years.

During 1965 special attention was given to the development of other new planning concepts for the Township; notably a Church-Park Study and a

¹Ibid., January 14, 1963.

²Ibid., February 10, 1964.

School-Park Study. Both proposals (especially the former) represented innovative efforts in the metropolitan area to plan for uses which might be compatibly combined at a financial saving to the Township. Furthermore, proposals of this nature considered the desirability of establishing dispersed activity centers as an initiative toward the eventual establishment of a community-wide center.¹

De Facto Planning--
Cases in Point

The proposal for a community center in June of 1966, though founded upon previous planning criteria, was, like other major township programs in the past - a result of fiscal necessity. In the early part of the year, Township officials were informed that a rezoning proposal for a \$20 million retail mall was soon to be submitted to the planning commission for land adjacent to Grand River Avenue between Okemos and Marsh Roads. This center, at the proposed site of the future community center posed several problems:

1. Although this site had been proposed for a community center, adjacent land to the north was also available.
2. If the Township was to acquire this land, they would have to do so before the announcement of the mall proposal as land cost would be certain to skyrocket in the area.

¹Ibid., May 14, 1963.

3. The Township lacked a definite plan for the development of the parcel in the event it was acquired. Thus, a plan would be needed to justify the purchase.

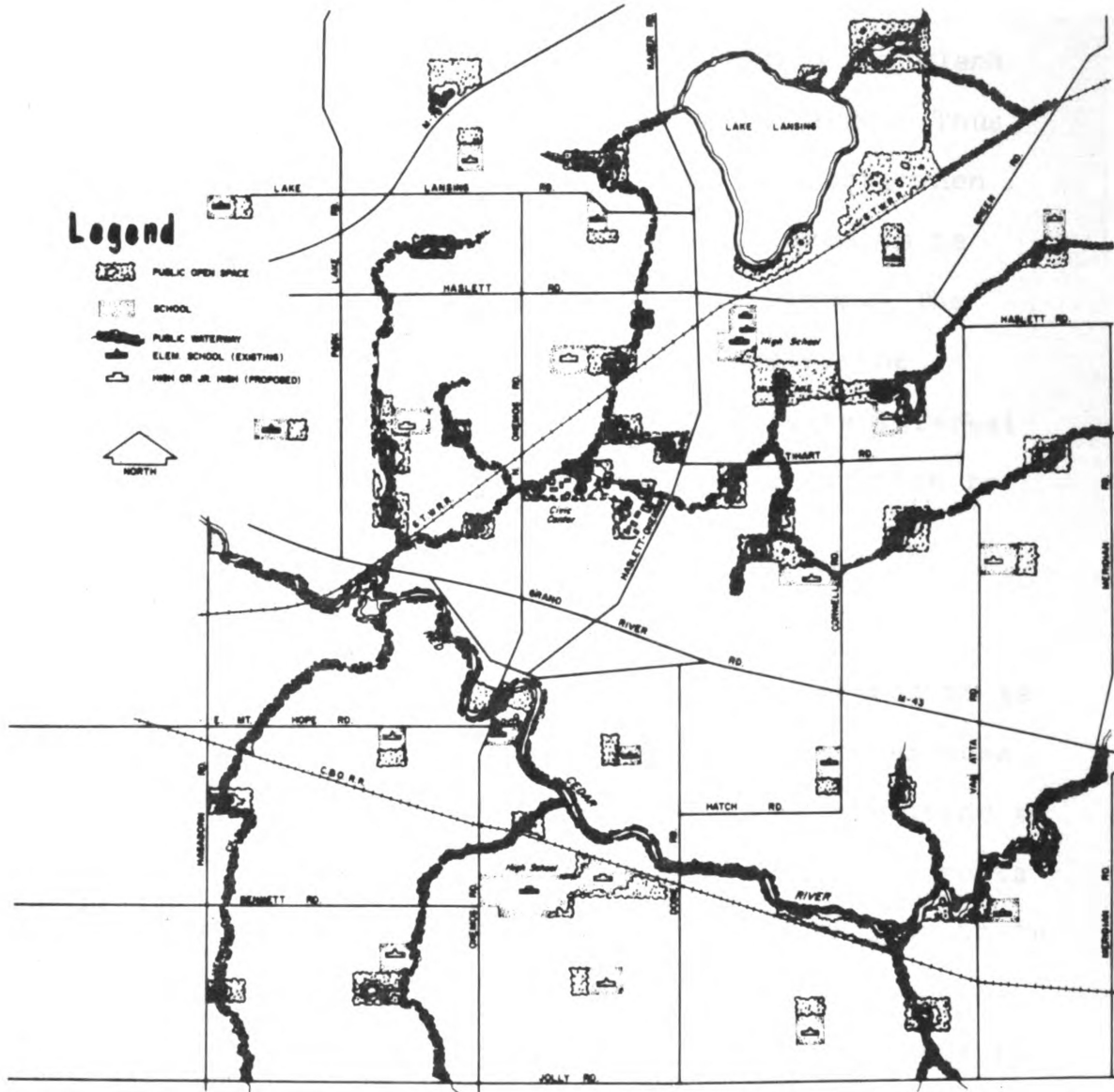
The Master Plan for Parks and Recreation did just this by providing a "dramatic new waterways and recreation plan . . . a striking example of how a community can plan for the future."¹ Figure 4, "Meridian Township Public Open Space and Waterways Master Plan", illustrates this character of the plan.

Indeed it was a "striking plan" but one which fell flat with regard to implementation. The "dramatic" proposals were too far reaching both financially and practically. Though the plan did indicate how funding could be made available, most of the suggested federal programs were for planning assistance only. Thus, the plan tended to assume the connotation of a utopian Meridian by the citizenry. Township reaction to the plan has been equally disappointing. No governmental agency of anykind has attempted to conform to the plan nor achieve the plan's state objectives. To this day, the plan is evidence of the changing role of the planning commission. This plan and the Meridian Mall rezoning illustrate how the changing population composition in the Township has promoted the reordering of interest

¹Meridian News, (September 6, 1966), pp. 1-2.

Figure 4

MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP **PUBLIC** **OPEN SPACE AND WATERWAYS** **MASTER PLAN**



groups in Township government to the extent that, as Walker points out, autonomous boards become arms of government.

These boards, yielding to the pressures of development and time, tend to effectively transfer the planning function to private developers. In Meridian, these developers had little regard for plans or the best interests of the community at large. Thus, the definition of the community's best interest, when transferred to a special interest group, tends to be twisted to reflect the attitudes of this group. The development of the Meridian Mall demonstrates the transfer of the planning function to a private interest group; and what must be done to return the function to government.

Redefining the Public Interest

Meridian Mall has consistently been referred to as being in the public interest. This conception pervades the Township government and is held by those who stand to economically profit by its location. In Meridian, costs of a particular development may be characterized by their high degree of interrelationship with social phenomena while benefits of the same development largely accrue in the economic sector. The following facts regarding Meridian Mall should be noted:

Costs

1. The site chosen was in violation of the Land Use Plan, which, though unadopted, did serve as the rationale for other rezoning decisions.
2. No programs have been undertaken to renovate the existing storm drainage which is presently at capacity.
3. Three private businesses have been forced out of business even before the opening of the new center in the anticipation of reduced business.
4. Grand River Avenue and Marsh Road have been glutted by mud and water for over two years due to construction.
5. No attempt has been made to promote lower cost housing for the future labor force the mall will require.
6. This site will increase traffic on Grand River Avenue and Okemos Road which are presently more heavily travelled, and of significantly lower capacity, than I-96.
7. Acres of topsoil have been lost to wind and water erosion since construction began.
8. The possibility exists that the rational need for such a large facility cannot be shown. In fact, its justification as a regional center may be questioned due to its location on an east-west axis with poor accessibility to other parts of the region.
9. The mall may be defined as the point of multiplication, an instigation of "growth like Topsy: which will initiate pressures for additional strip development along Grand River Avenue.
10. The ultimate loss in suburban identity to a type of growth not conducive to a good residential environment, will be felt by those who moved to Meridian to escape this type of urbanization.

Benefits

1. Increased tax base.
2. Increased regional employment.
3. Centralizing retail facilities for shopping convenience by decreasing transportation and parking costs.
4. Catalyst for future development.

Economic determinism is not new, however, the planner should avoid labeling it as the public interest. He should refuse to accept such fuzzy thinking as what is good for the tax base or for business is good for everybody. The planner must try to examine and balance such abstract concepts as loss of suburban identity against tax dollar revenue. In the same manner, other social costs should be considered as part of the public interest of which the economics of development are only one part. When the planner finds he must justify a particular proposal, he should identify and enumerate to whom the ultimate costs and benefits will accrue.

A New Role for Planning in Meridian Township

I am reminded of a recent discussion concerning the planning function at the 1969 Michigan Society of Planning Officials. The speaker, fielding a question from the audience regarding the establishment of planning goals, perfunctorily responded that goals should reflect the best interests of everyone.

Interestingly enough, the speaker felt he had provided the answer; but more importantly, the audience too was satisfied. This occurrence may have resulted from two possibilities. On the one hand, the audience in each personal instance, knew through empirical evidence exactly what was the best interest for every other individual. I doubt that any mortal will ever possess such perception except in the most general terms. This leads to the second possibility that perhaps we, as listeners, fattened on such nebulous pap, have become too accustomed to escaping difficult problems through the utterance of vague rhetoric and hackneyed phraseology that we no longer respond when the need arises.

Adequate substantiation for this possibility may be found withing the introduction of both of Meridian's adopted plans. These plans present goals so vague, that one has little indication of how they may be achieved.¹ These so called "apple pie and

¹"Master Plan for Major Streets and Highways," Meridian Township, 1959, p. 1. See also "Master Plan for Parks and Recreation,: Meridian Charter Township, 1966, pp. 16-17.

and motherhood" goals were originally designed to physically represent the philosophical concept of the good life.¹

With the advent of P.P.B.S. and the policy planning approach, increased attention is being drawn toward the need for more definitive statements of planning goals. Planning is no longer considered an ivory tower preoccupation, but a rational method of problem solution. The planner of today must stress the implementation of his programs and expend less time in intellectual exercises aimed at defining utopia. For the ultimate measure of the success or failure of a particular plan will not depend upon its esoteric qualities but on its ability to get a particular job done. The inability of Meridian to implement its waterways plan is an example of this over-reaching of reality.

Meridian's planners, and planners in general, should question the nature of goal formulation as well as traditional planning methodology. Too often in the past, Meridian's goals were relegated to a visionary role. The first land use plan which served as a basis

¹An excellent discussion regarding the problems of ranking and classifying goals may be found in K.J. Arrow, Social Choice and Invididual Values (New York: John Willey Co., 1951).

for rezoning decisions during the early 1960's is an example. Here, goals were embodied in a physical design map but not explicit in a document of planning rationale. As a result, violations of the plan could be justified whenever the map was shown to be wrong. The definition of right and wrong was dependent upon each particular case due to the lack of an over-riding rationale. Thus, the map was either correct or incorrect with no compromise possible. On the other hand, planning rationale in documented form is more adaptable to the push and pull of decision making with its greater ability for interpretation than the finality of a map. Thus, as we expect more sophisticated levels of goal formulation so must Meridian's planners design more sophisticated methods for their expression.

Generalized goals, however, do serve a needed function in guiding long range growth. However, their adaptation to the short range development stage has produced much dismay toward the planning profession when they are interpreted and defined as the public interest. Too often, planners faced with the justification for a particular controversial development such as the Meridian Mall will rely upon a liberal definition of the public interest to cover practically everything. Thus, the term "public interest" has been used to represent the

philosophical concept of the good life, induced into short range planning.

How then does this relate to a new role for the planner? First, because the planner needs the support and confidence of his constituency, he must divorce himself from the utterance of platitudes. Secondly, the planner must replace vague project justifications with a concrete cost-benefit analysis; and most importantly, he must give up the concept of an economically determined public interest.

A better definition of the public interest of the community at large may be explained as:

Instead of being associated with substantive goals or policies, the public interest survives identification with the process of group accommodation.¹

More explicitly, Adrian explains:

When any group announces a policy position, it seeks explicitly or implicitly to associate its stand with the public interest. In fact, virtually every politically active individual or group claims--sincerely no doubt--to be acting in the name of the public interest. Critics of the stand taken by a particular group, on the other hand, not uncommonly complain that pressure groups are selfish and that they ought to act in the public interest. With everyone thus using the term, it becomes useless as an analytical tool.²

¹Frank J. Sorauf, "The Public Interest Reconsidered," Journal of Politics, XIX (November, 1957), p. 638.

²Charles R. Adrian, State and Local Governments (Second Edition, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 183.

Thus, the planner aiming for group accommodation errs whenever he identifies a particular course of action as incumbent of the public interest. As such, the planner is faced with determining his planning mandate from a conflicting mixture of public and private interests. How then may the planner plan if he is to give up the concept of a unified public interest?

He should begin with the realization that interest groups may be coalesced into three categories of influence groups based on the measure of coercion they are able to exert upon the planner's decisions. These groups may be thought of as the peer group or institutional system, the secondary group of citizenry, and the technical core or those of the future for which the techniques of planning are intended.¹ Any particular decision, then, will accrue costs in varying proportions among these levels of influence. The ultimate benefits of which fall to those of each interest group suffering the least costs.

In Meridian, the planner would find that the ultimate costs of Meridian Mall and similar developments

¹For a similar three level distinction, see James Thompson, "Organization Goals and Environmental Goal Setting as an Interaction Process," American Sociological Review, XXIII (1958).

will be borne by those of the future, the technical core. Similarly, those of the secondary group, especially the oldtimers and the newcomers of an earlier period whose landed investments are high, suffer equally. Those benefitting, on the other hand, are those in government who have found the pressures for urban services difficult to finance. Commercial development is a simple solution to the complex problems of suburbia - a high yielding solution requiring little public investment as well. With the unfavorable response toward light industrial development, there really was no other alternative. Consequently, the planning commission responded to the mall rezoning, not entirely unaware of the consequences, but more aware of the responsibilities they had developed toward government in recent years. And government, more responsive to the demands of the citizenry, yielded to the pressures of commercial development

Regaining the Planning Function

In an effort to retrieve the planning function from private developers and return to true comprehensive planning, Meridian applied for, and received, financial assistance for comprehensive planning during 1968 and 1969. This funding, under Section 701 of the Housing

Act of 1954 as amended, permitted the Township to acquire the services of additional planners. These planners, working independently from the administrative activities which had characterized early planning in the Township, are in the process of preparing a comprehensive development plan. This plan, a culmination of two years of study, will hopefully fill the void of earlier planning efforts and provide guidelines for Township officials regarding future development decisions. In these cases, the plan would "prima facie" indicate a possible line of action rather than, as in the past, become a "de facto" justification for particular decisions. Thus, the distinction between administrative and comprehensive planning may be characterized as simply as this. "701" planning has permitted the Township to recognize the distinction, and make full use of the potentials of each.

Chapter Summary

Planning may be visualized as consisting of two separate but compatible activities. According to Goodman:

If the planning agency is to make its whole contribution to more effective municipal government and orderly planned urban growth, it must emphasize both its substantive and its administrative responsibility. Preoccupation with the day-to-day pressures of zoning administration or review of proposed subdivision plats leaves little time for advance

planning or for the research that must precede and support long range planning. Furthermore, neglect of advisory and coordinating responsibilities can lead in time to isolation of the planning agency so that its advice is given little heed.¹

The development of planning in Meridian Township may be said to have more or less followed this distinction through the evolution of two groups concerned with planning. The development of a lay planning commission may be explained as an example of the Theory of Functional Accretion. The planning staff, representing the second group concerned with planning, owes its creation to the professionalization of government.

Planning commissions with their integration into the structure of government tend to divorce themselves from the *raison d'être* for their extence. Administratively, planning fulfills the expectations of the charter township form of government by providing a means to acquire efficiently the public and pribate improvements which are necessary in an urbanizing area. However, when matters other than the dollar are considered, planning seems a disappointment. Comprehensively, planning in Meridian Township has not reflected the best interests of the community. Rather, special interest groups have tended to dominate as the degree of

¹Goodman, p. 526.

specialization and departmentalization within the government increased. As such, the lay planning commission identified with the interests of government, which did not represent the interests of the community as a whole. It is difficult for the township board or for any legislative body to disassociate itself from the various special interests groups that have elected its membership. The planning commission, owing its creation to the legislature, is equally influenced, and often deluded to the degree that the public interest may be defined as that of one special group.

Planning staff, on the other hand, reflects its creation by the executive branch whose function has traditionally been one of coordination and interest group consolidation. Thus, it is not surprising that the comprehensive approach to the planning function would gravitate to the staff. Only by removal from the pressure of private interest group domination can true comprehensive planning result.

Judgment

Planning in Meridian Township is representative of a pattern of response to urbanization; and, has, through the adaptation and execution of various programs, provided the direction for charter township growth. The evidence

of planning's selective responsiveness to public demands in the Township has been shown. This failure of planning to embrace a comprehensive approach in defining the public interest has created a situation where public actions are often at odds with private desires.

It is difficult to judge the value of planning in an assessment of charter township government. Certainly, planning has exhibited a limited success in administering development. However, trying to equate this against a normative standard of comprehensive excellence produced a negligible response. I find a tendency on the part of Township officials and planning commissioners to acknowledge their shortcomings while stressing their successes. This philosophy of "things could be worse" tends to promote the status quo without making progress toward improving planning's shortcomings. Though I do acknowledge successful planning within Meridian Charter Township, I am not convinced that the "things could be worse" belief is a proper evaluation. Certainly, some will argue that an evaluation is impossible due to personal value systems. Each person determines differently how much good planning is necessary to offset the bad. Logically, the correct balance will never be reached as each individual is of his own opinion.

The solution to this dilemma would seem to rest with the theoretical basis of both government and planning.

The democratic ethic stresses the exhaltation of the individual over society while our planning heritage has developed the comprehensive approach. Thus, recognizing the individual, I would agree with Weaver's cliché which states that we must plan for people and not for things.¹ Because the comprehensive approach requires this orientation, an evaluation of a planning program must rest entirely with the quality of this program. Therefore, due to the inability to weigh administration planning against comprehensive planning, and the necessity to judge human activity with a comprehensive approach, one must conclude that planning in Meridian Charter Township has been a limited success.

¹Weaver, p. 26.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The objective of this thesis has been to critically analyze the form and function of charter township government with the aim of discerning why the planning function has not fulfilled its intended role in a transitional form of government in the urbanization of rural areas. A case study approach was selected as it was felt that any potential failure could not be completely attributable to enabling legislation (form). Rather, it was felt that an analysis of the application (function) of this system of government to the process of urbanization in a particular locale would reveal its basic weaknesses. This chapter presents my conclusions to this thesis using the dual approach of form and function. Final judgment of the charter township, however, must be based upon its function because the best measure of a system of government is its application to reality.

Form

The form government assumes largely determines the ability of government to cope with the problems of urbanization. Regarding the Township's ability, the Governmental Study Committee reported "Townships govern land and cities govern people."¹ However, I doubt that the distinction is quite that simple, nor that limited. Both cities and townships, as viable units of local government, exhibit all the characteristics of what have been revered in this country as the principles of self-government. Of the township, Thomas Jefferson said,

These wards, called townships in New England, are the vital principle of their governments, and have proved themselves the wisest convention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government and for its preservation.²

Others, witnessing the development of the township since Jefferson's day are less kind in their remarks. These critics direct their attack toward the charter township which, according to Adrian, "is in essence a special

¹"Governmental Study Committee Report," for Meridian Charter Township, Ingham County, Michigan, 1968, (Mimeographed).

²Thomas Jefferson in Joseph A. Parisi, Jr., A Manual for Township Officials (Lansing: Michigan Townships Association, 1963), p. 1.

type of city government, existing through historical accident."¹ The resemblance of the charter township to its general law counterpart, is, as I have pointed out, in name only. The charter township has assumed practically all the duties that have traditionally fallen to cities; and to quite an efficient degree. Hence, the "historical accident" to which Professor Adrian refers would have to be the Charter Township Act of 1948; the Act, it will be remembered, which sought to provide the means by which rural areas might smoothly evolve to more urbanized forms.

Function

The charter township has been a limited success. On the one hand, the charter township has proven successful in coping with the problems of urbanization. Its higher taxing rate has permitted government expansion by providing additional personnel and facilities to meet increasing demands; while its excellent bonding capacity has permitted the installation of public utilities at a level of quality rivaling that of the finest cities. The traditional conservatism of township government in conjunction with personalized treatment of development has tended to have a moderating influence on development while reducing the possibilities of run-away growth.

¹Adrian, p. 217.

The relatively low tax rate has been instrumental in encouraging suburban development. This type of development, usually containing a politically activist segment of the population, has found charter township government amiable to their desires. In addition, charter townships have provided all the amenities of political self-determination as part of our American ethic regarding the necessity of local independence.

The major disappointment of this system of government is a direct result of its actual success. There are few significant advantages in dissolving charter townships in favor of more urbanized forms. When weighed against the attitudes of the polity which charter townships helped to create, these advantages seem a weak argument for abandoning a style of suburban living which the citizenry has sought and achieved. The Governmental Study Committee listed eight advantages for Meridian Township to incorporate as a city: These are:

1. Stabilization of the tax base. The threat of annexation of township land would largely be removed.
2. Prestige. To some this might appear a theoretical advantage. But commercial and industrial and residential developers tell us that a city government structure, by and large, is more attractive to developers. They consider it more able and more stable.
3. Higher millage limitation than available to townships can be set by charter.

4. Making the decisions on when and how road work should be done. Even though the new city were to contract the road work out to the county, the decisions on when, where and how to do the work still would be made by the city.
5. Direct, or centralized control of the police, if it were desired. It should be pointed out that the new city, if it desired, need not make any material change.
6. A city government would have a louder voice in regional planning.
7. Incorporation will unite people of the township, while allowing the present school districts to be maintained. Boundaries of school districts will not be affected.
8. The establishment of a home rule city. This is one of the greatest advantages, one that should not be lost sight of in the talk about the threat of loss of tax revenue land through annexation.¹

These advantages, though they may appear pertinent to those advocating a stronger stature on the part of local government, do not provide tangible evidence of the suburban citizenry. Again, the necessity of crisis politics becomes obvious within Meridian Township. No crisis is imminent except the threat of annexation to which the citizenry has become numbed through years of exposure to the issue. Consequently, the suburban dweller finds it difficult to believe that higher taxes will provide him with a higher degree of quality of services than he presently receives or even desires.

¹"Governmental Study Committee Report," p. 11.

Preference is the key issue and one which tends to be forgotten in all the hubhub over urbanization. The suburban dweller, as we have seen in Meridian Township, tends to be politically active, when in the minority, to achieve the style of living he desires. As a newcomer, he is often an influential instigator of various governmental activities in response to the process of urbanization. After a time, these innovations, on his part, tend to lose contact with the issues from which they evolved and become subject to higher social laws. Thus, according to Sokolow and Walker, social movements and organizations become self-perpetuating entities; and as the charter townships and planning commission evolve, they are caught in the dynamics of this inexorable law. As a result, to the detriment of their original intent, these bodies no longer tend to respond to the wishes of their creators who say, "stop, we have had enough growth!" Instead, activities increase rapidly; and, past the "point of multiplication," they tend to become special interest groups in their own right.

The most detrimental special interest group in Meridian Township has been the land developer. Due to the failure of the township planning commission to maintain a consistency of action toward the problems

of urbanization, the comprehensive planning approach has taken a back seat to administrative activities. In the absence of appropriate planning, private development has filled the void defining their determination of Meridian's future as the "public interest". Planning, through its failure to redefine the public interest in a more realistic manner, has become the most disappointing activity of Meridian's government. In this respect, planning has provided the means for transforming a rural area into an urbanized one; but it has not provided the type of transitional development the community desires.

At the point when the charter township may contemplate the transition to a more urbanized form, the suburban newcomer has replaced the oldtimer as a numerical majority. At this point, he tends to reject an alteration of his suburban status quo. Gordon has identified this phenomena as the "tendency of minorities to innovate and the majority to regulate."¹ Development in Meridian Township, as I have shown, aptly characterizes this relationship. City incorporation, largely an innovation of the business interest minority in Meridian Township, attempts to go beyond the preference of the majority for suburban style government. Thus, the charter township, inspired as the "halfway house to urbanization",

¹Milton M. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 60-83.

does not achieve its intent by providing a low cost system of government able to provide nearly the same level of operations and services as more urbanized forms. Charter townships are quasi-cities--a form of growth tending to inhibit their transitional intent.

Further Investigation

There have been many questions raised in this thesis, some of which have been discussed at length, while others require new approaches for further investigation.

In the process of examining the need for charter township government and the proper role of planning within these systems, I became aware of the transcendental nature of these problems to other organization forms of government and over society in general. I found it difficult in some cases to isolate factors to charter townships and not to government in general. This problem is especially acute when employing a case study approach. The tendency exists to generalize every conclusion to all charter townships, especially those thoughts concerning its function. Care should be exercised in determining each case on its own merit, as the principle weakness of this type of government lies not entirely in its form but more in its application to the process of urbanization. The close interrelationship of form and function requires this additional care in further investigation.

This investigation should include an analysis of other forms of government as they provide alternatives to charter townships. The following discussion reflects this author's opinions regarding possible further investigation into alternatives to charter townships.

The Need for a Comprehensive Approach

The chief weakness of charter townships has been due to an inability to adopt a comprehensive planning approach to the problems of urbanization. Regional government has often been suggested as the best vehicle to hurdle these difficulties.

The problems of suburbia which have inspired this thesis are derived from regional phenomena which transcend municipal boundaries. This is the age of metropolitan man whose society is different from any in the past. The complexities, divergencies, and interdependencies of our society have produced an environment of great contrasts. We see on the one hand pockets of great wealth in our suburban areas, while on the other hand, the deprivation and poverty of the inner city resident.

To the commuter, the problems of poverty and central city finance can be largely invisible as he flits along the freeway. Because they are not a part of his everyday life, it is easy for him to take comfort in the notion that the central city and its problems are worlds apart from the

green fields of suburbia. Technology has created this pattern of thought.

Though the automobile and freeway have shortened the physical distance from city to suburb; the psychological, social, and economic distances have been lengthened. Advances in technology have helped to create the physical metropolis at the expense of destroying the identity of the metropolitan community. It is easy to bow to the notion that the community is contained within the boundaries of the individual municipality. Charter townships promote this very notion in the urbanizing process of rural areas. Thus, the metropolitan concept of community, when introduced into a political heritage of local autonomy, is difficult for the suburbanite to comprehend.

Carrying local autonomy and disassociation from the metropolitan community by the suburbanite to its ultimate conclusion must certainly end in disaster for all concerned. Dahl and Lindblom have called this development an example of disjointed incrementalism. This means that within our metropolitan areas decisions are made by a variation of interest groups. Whether they be decisions of private enterprise or public bodies of government, each institution acts in its own best interest. Within the public sphere alone, townships,

incorporated villages, cities, counties, school districts, and various state authorities all contribute to the hodge-podge of urban development. This development has helped to promote the isolation of interest groups and duplication of governmental efforts. Charter townships are but one more special interest group added to the already saturated metropolitan system.

This indictment seems to rest with the potential of rural areas on the urban fringe to become urbanized. However, more extensive county government, could stem the tide of governmental balkanization in order to provide a higher degree of incentive within specific areas to incorporate when the time is deemed correct.

County Government

In these cases, the theory of crisis politics would seem to apply though it need not prove detrimental to the development of the rural area due to moderating influence of the county. Thus, only those areas with concentrations of population would incorporate as a city in order to offer better intensive services. The less concentrated areas would remain under the jurisdiction of the county, whose administrative machinery is geared to the provision of extensive levels of services between urban areas.

The charter township, on the other hand, through its use of the same geographical boundaries which contain the general law township, sets the scale for future city incorporation of the total area. Just as the urbanized areas may be transformed into that of a city, so too must the rural areas as they also are bound by the charter. Although legally the charter township is not required to include the rural areas in future incorporations, it is certain that any suggestion of gerrymandering would split the vote and no doubt defeat the issue. In addition, the ethical issue of relegating an area to a lower level of services than that which could be supplied under charter township government is equally important. For in the event of a gerrymandered incorporation, those areas not included would probably return to general law township status.

This theory is interesting, and certainly a step in the direction toward an expanded role for county government. But, the question ultimately becomes: can the county handle the increased burdens of urbanizing areas? Certainly such a move would require a more efficient county government than presently exists.

Adrian acknowledges the expanding scope of county activities during the 1960's and the need for a larger role in the future,

Counties are performing an increasing number of functions of government, particularly counties that contain a large proportion of urban residents.

The traditional functions . . . have been augmented both through the assumption of new services and through the transfer to the county of services once provided by other local governments, particularly the townships . . . In fact, some counties in some states are today performing all of the functions of the municipality, although the number and variety of functions varies from one county to the next. Despite talk about the trend towards centralization, the fact is that functionally the county is of greater importance today than a generation ago, and expansion of the services provided by its government appears likely to continue.¹

The county would appear the best alternative to the charter township for several reasons.

1. Expansion of county governing functions would reduce the detrimental tendencies for Balkanization in metropolitan areas.
2. Counties containing metropolitan areas have a broad enough tax base to finance the intensive provision of urban services.
3. Counties are large enough geographically to attack problems with a comprehensive approach; while they are still small enough to insure good grass-roots democracy.
4. The potential for successful modernization of county structure is greater than the hopes for the establishment of a new "super-government."

Metropolitan Government

Norris Ingells, writing for the "State Journal" on the prospects of metropolitan government for the Greater Lansing Areas has said:

If someone were to suggest tomorrow that Lansing, East Lansing, and the surrounding townships give

¹Adrian, pp. 211-212.

up their political autonomy and unite into a single supergovernment, the chorus would be deafening. A better approach would entail the establishment of a voluntary Council of Governments (COG) in which the elected officials of the local governments are the same people who make up the Council of Government. Together, they establish regional policy and individually, they - and only they - can carry out this policy in their local areas. Thus, they can develop recommendations on the solutions of regional problems without sacrificing any traditional authority or responsibility.¹

Though the prospects for a COG are enticing, they have not proven to be viable units of government due to the lack of appropriate legislative powers. Where these units have obtained powers commensurate with other local units of government, they have proven successful in coping with water, sewer, transportation, and other problems of an extensive nature. Future prospects for a COG in the Lansing area are questionable. The desirability of a COG is equally questionable as they really do not prevent Balkanization, but merely reduce its implications.

Consolidation

Other alternatives to charter townships are not difficult to enumerate. However, their applicability to a particular community will depend upon particular local characteristics. One characteristic might be

¹Norris Ingells, State Journal, June 1, 1967 and June 2, 1967.

the geographical distribution of urbanization in proximity to incorporated political units. Take, for example, the Wardcliff area in Meridian Township. This area, largely one of the older residential developments in the Township, lies contiguous to the similar type of development annexed to East Lansing in the 1958 Marble School Annexation. One may hypothesize that had not Meridian chartered in 1959, Wardcliff would probably have annexed to East Lansing in order to obtain the same level of services which Marble enjoyed. Meridian chartered, however, and was able to provide sanitary sewer, thus stemming the tendency to annex. Consequently, as general law townships are unable to provide urbanized services on the fringe areas of cities, the incentives for annexation to an urbanized area are enhanced. Annexation of this type should be desired as it represents the logical extension of municipal growth - the antithesis of urban sprawl.

City Incorporation

Another characteristic to be considered in examining the prospects for alternative forms of government is the degree of urbanization of areas not adjacent to an incorporated area. Within general law townships, there may exist, as in Meridian, pockets of concentrated urban growth. State law provides that when population density reaches 500 per square mile with a total population of

of at least 750, any area possessing these minimums may incorporate as a fifth class city. Those areas having a population greater than 2,000 with the same density may incorporate as a home rule city under Michign law.¹ The major difference between the two is that former elects its legislature at large while the latter's are selected by wards or other suitable jurisdictions. This type of growth does not represent a proliferation of government, due to the fact that cities would incorporate only when all other alternatives have failed to bring them the level of services they were seeking.

Just as the charter township might find it necessary to incorporate, so might theurbanized areas of the general law township, with the distinct advantage of incorporating only the urbanized areas. Because the general law township generally lacks the extensive distribution of public utilities and urban services, there tends to be missing the cohesive element which ties rural and urban together in the charter township. Consequently, incorporation of only the urbanized areas in a general law township does not tend to generate the same opposition as might be found when attempting this within a charter township. In addition, those areas not included within

¹Verburg, pp. 1-2.

the incorporation would remain under general law township jurisdiction and not suffer a relegation to a lower level of government as might occur within a charter township attempting partial incorporation.

Incorporated Villages

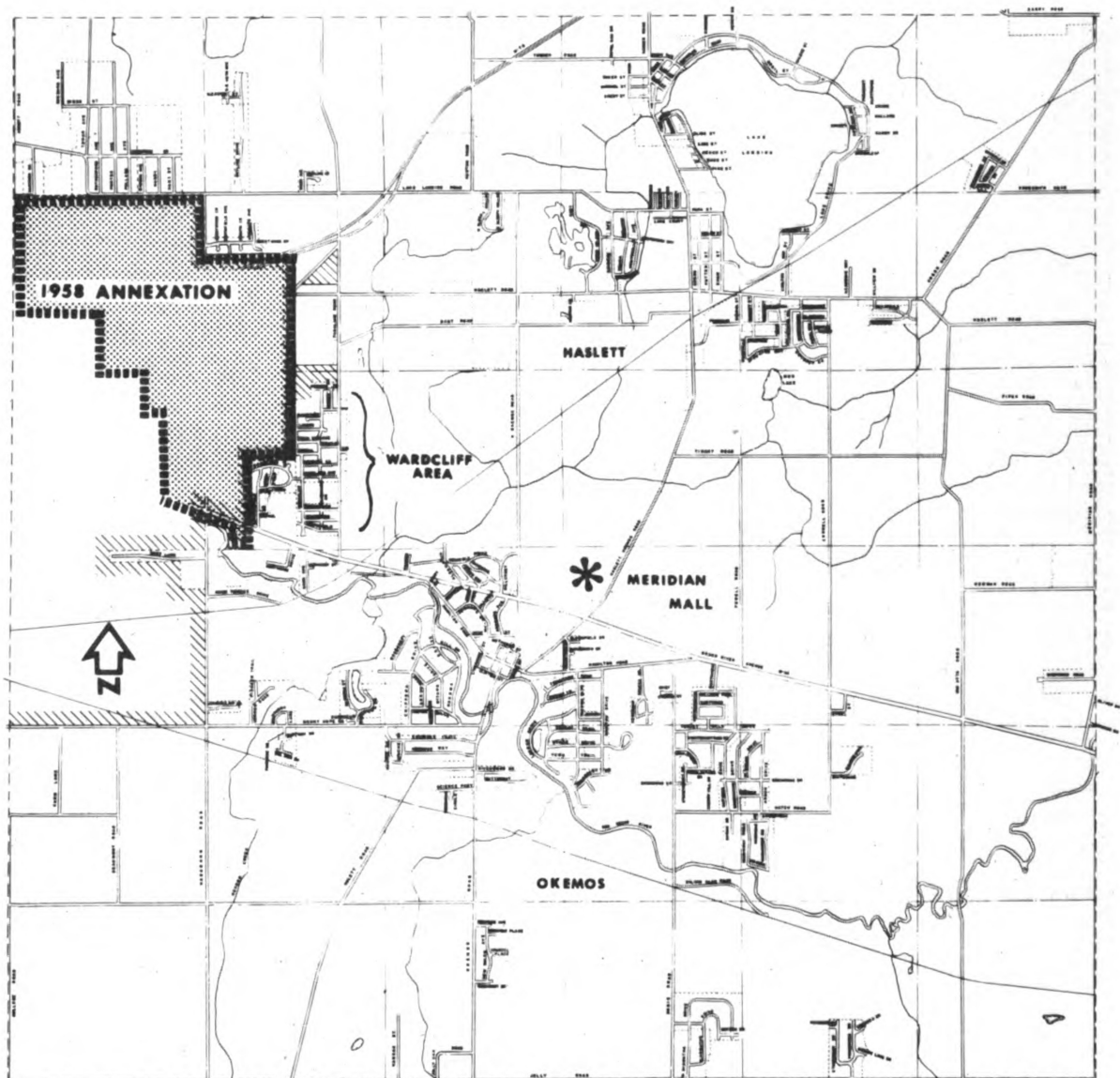
Other, lesser used patterns of growth in the State are possible through the incorporation of villages. Though advocacy of such a policy may seem a contradiction to the discontinuance of governmental proliferation, incorporated villages may be viewed as a transitional form of government. Much the same as charter townships, villages may gravitate to higher forms of urbanization either through incorporation as a city or through consolidation with an adjacent urbanized area. However, the incorporated village has an advantage over the charter township in that it usually represents a more urbanized complex, and one which has not invested as great an amount in capital improvements. Again, this represents a rational form of growth.¹

¹Richard R. Duke, Planning in the Urban Fringe (East Lansing: Institute for Community Development, 1963), p. 1.

APPENDIX

Figure 5

MERIDIAN CHARTER TOWNSHIP



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