

# THE ARRIVAL OF PERFORMANCE-BASED GROWTH MANAGEMENT

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Performance-based growth management has arrived on the scene in the guise of programs adopted by a number of communities, programs that coordinate land use policies, capital improvements, organizational arrangements, funding mechanisms, and monitoring devices to achieve specific environmental and public facility performance standards. Performance-based growth management is pragmatic, strategic, and management-oriented, and it focuses the growth debate on its underlying causes: the quality of the environment and the adequacy of public services. It shifts the debate from the pros and cons of growth in general to what kind of community people want.

## Different Approaches

The outline of the concept is straightforward. First, a community determines which systems it wants to control—say traffic flow, air quality, or school crowding—and then it sets a measurable standard for the performance of those systems. Then, in the form of simple or complex models that predict how the systems are affected by various growth and mitigation scenarios, the community assesses the relationship between growth and the performance standards. Finally, it adopts a strategy that combines land use policies, capital improvement programming, mitigation measures, design standards, and other actions that ensure compliance with the standards by a certain date; creates the appropriate organization and financing to implement that strategy; and monitors progress toward meeting the standards, making whatever adjustments to the standards or strategy are necessary.

In practice, performance-based growth management systems come in different sizes and shapes tailored to particular circumstances.

**When standards must be met.** Some jurisdictions set standards which must be met by a certain date in the future, similar to federal air-quality standards. These standards are sometimes referred to as targets or objectives. Other jurisdictions set standards that must be attained immediately. These standards are sometimes referred to as concurrency standards. The growth management plan of Carlsbad, California, for example, contains fire service and open

space standards that are to be met concurrent with new development.

**Goals v. requirements.** In some cases, performance standards are not mandatory. These might be called advisory standards. For example, the city of Walnut Creek, California, has drafted a policy to "strive to achieve and maintain" performance standards for administrative facilities, libraries, police and fire protection, and parks. These standards are considered goals to help the city make its capital budget; noncompliance will not result in restrictions on development.

**Number of performance measures included.** Some performance-based growth management systems refer to only a single standard. The most common standard in use concerns traffic flow. Other popular objects of standard making include air quality, water supply, and the jobs/housing balance.

**Measurement criteria.** Since the measurement of even quantitative standards can be subject to interpretation, jurisdictions often specify the measurement method to be used. Traffic, for example, usually must be measured according to level-of-service standards published in the Institute of Transportation Engineers' *Highway Capacity Manual*. Qualitative standards are uncommon although sometimes necessary for dealing with nonquantifiable goals, such as design quality.

**Strategy to achieve the standards.** Various factors—the rate, type, location, design, and intensity of development; the capacity of the environmental or infrastructure systems; and the amount of resources/services that particular developments use—affect environmental or public service performance levels. Each of these performance-controlling factors can be affected by a number of policy tools including education, capital improvement programming, land use controls, urban design, environmental mitigation, and civil engineering. Probably the most commonly used tool among the various performance-based systems currently in place is coordinating the permitting of development with the installation of adequate public facilities.

Financing plans are often a prominent part of the strategy, particularly when capital improvements are included. New taxes, development exactions, late-comer agreements, and other pay-as-you-go mecha-

## EXAMPLES OF PERFORMANCE-BASED GROWTH MANAGEMENT

**Bellevue, Washington. 1989 Traffic Ordinance.** Bellevue's new ordinance commits the city to meeting traffic flow standards by coordinating the pace of new office development with a variety of roadway, transit, and demand management improvements. The pace of development and capital improvements will be adjusted as necessary.

**Florida. 1985 Local Government Comprehensive Planning and Land Development Regulation Act and 1986 Minimum Criteria for Review of Comprehensive Plans and Determination of Compliance.** This statewide program requires local governments to adopt level-of-service standards for transportation, sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, education, parks, recreation, and public health systems or facilities. The 1986 criteria require that facilities and services to meet the standards be made available "concurrent with the impacts of development, or that development orders

and permits are specifically conditioned on the availability of the facilities and services necessary to serve the proposed development."

**Contra Costa County, California. 1988 Transportation Improvement and Growth Management Program.** This program allocates tax revenues to cities for local street maintenance and improvements provided that they adopt a growth management plan that includes performance standards for traffic, fire and police protection, parks, sanitary facilities, water, and flood control, as well as a development mitigation program and a five-year capital improvement program to ensure achievement and maintenance of the performance standards.

**San Diego County. 1988 Regional Planning and Growth Control Measure.** This recently approved ballot measure calls for the establishment of a board to formulate a regional growth management plan with quality-of-life standards for transpor-

tation, solid waste disposal, water reclamation, sewage disposal, and air quality. The measure also calls for growth phasing that will ensure the adequacy of facilities and attain the quality-of-life standards.

**Carlsbad, California. 1986 Growth Facilities and Improvement Plan.** Carlsbad, a city in San Diego County, uses performance standards to ensure "that development does not occur unless adequate public facilities and services exist or will be provided concurrent with new development." Specific standards have been adopted for city administrative facilities, libraries, wastewater treatment capacity, parks, drainage, traffic circulation, fire protection, open space, schools, sewer collection, and water distribution. The plan established 25 local facility management zones. Before any development is permitted, the affected zone must have submitted a plan that ensures that the performance standards will be met. ■

nisms have commonly appeared in performance-based growth management systems.

### Many Outstanding Issues

Like most growth management programs, performance-based systems raise a number of issues, some technical and some political.

On the technical front, people are asking: What is the best way to measure whether standards are being achieved? How do you deal with seasonal and other cyclical variations in the performance of environmental and public facility systems? How can the meaning and implications of various standards be communicated to people? Do we know enough about the relationship between various growth management strategies and the performance measures to be able to predict their effectiveness?

Other issues are more political: What systems should be subject to standards and should goals for these systems take precedence over other objectives, like jobs or affordable housing? Is the high administrative and financial cost of establishing and monitoring the systems worth the results? How does a community cope with impacts on its performance

generated by development outside the community? Will one community's pursuit of performance goals displace growth to places less equipped to handle it? Who should bear the responsibility for meeting the agreed-upon standards? Should the burden be placed on landowners and developers by further regulating new development? Or should existing residents help pay for more infrastructure or be more conservative in how they use existing resources?

Performance-based growth management does provide a new focus for the growth debate. It does not eliminate the potential for tough controls on development, but it does have a positive aim: improving the quality of life. Its emphasis on establishing concrete objectives and strategies for achieving them seems preferable to negative programs built on blind opposition to growth and the belief that development causes every problem a community may be facing. ■

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