

PLS 592---Lessons or Decision Rules in Planning and Politics

Lessons or Decision Rules represent informal or unwritten norms in the planning process that people usually observe and take into account when participating in the process.

- ✍ Generally speaking if there are no stakeholders who oppose a land use change, the elected body approves the request if the petitioner makes their case. Some call this negative pluralism where many could veto but no one could successfully launch activist initiatives.
- ✍ If the request for a change in land use produces “no perceived harm” the request is approved.
- ✍ It is a truism that a proposed change must always preserve existing property values and to a lesser extent preserve existing social character. Thus protection of “use values” notably environmental protection and neighborhood stability are quite common.
- ✍ Do not stack planning bodies with individuals who have a direct economic interest in major land use decisions.
- ✍ Citizen groups should not be given “absolute veto power” over land use decisions, the planning unit should involve the citizens proactively in the process whenever possible.
- ✍ All major projects requesting land use changes should receive a professional impact analysis before decisions are made. These analyses may take the form of environmental impact studies, cost benefit studies.
- ✍ Major employers, even LULUs, regularly get their land use changes approved if they add new jobs to the local economy, therefore stopping them is extremely difficult and the strategy should be to make them pay some price and to insure high quality development.
- ✍ Homeowner and citizen groups as well as other key stakeholders are the most influential when they get involved in getting local officials elected.
- ✍ Public hearings are critical to eventual land use approvals, they should be taken seriously and done professionally or even done by professionals.
- ✍ More people with a planning background or appropriate “planning attitude” should be elected to public office because lay citizens appointed to planning boards take time to learn the rules of the game.
- ✍ Capital budgets should not be adopted without a Master Plan and no capital expenditures should be allowed without evaluating it in light of the Master Plan (very controversial).