

Planning Consultant Discusses Initiating Program for Valley

Harold F. Wise, Palo Alto, Calif., a planning consultant said last night that "continuity" is one of the most important factors in a long range, comprehensive plan for an urbanized area.

Wise, principal associate for Harold F. Wise associates, discussed initiating a general or "master" plan for the valley metropolitan area with members of the city and county planning commissions, the Medford city council and representatives of Medford School District 49.

Starting Point
Such a plan, Wise pointed out, is a starting point, not an end, and once started it should be continuous, "not turned on and off from crisis to crisis."

A planning program, he noted, puts down in words, maps, tables and charts general recommendations as to how land may be economically and efficiently developed and used. The program, he added, should reflect the interests of the community as a whole.

A general guide for development should be representative in terms of what the people desire, imaginative in projecting growth of the area, and realistic in emphasizing what is possible and financially feasible.

The basic element of the planning program, Wise said, "is a sound general plan for land use. The ways in which land is to be used, the distribution and density of population, the intensity of industrial and commercial uses, are the basis of planning for streets and highways, public facilities and utilities, and other community needs."

Concern of People
Wise said planning procedures are not the exclusive concern of planners, engineers, city officials or other technicians. "They are the concern of all the people of the community." He said for that reason it is desirable to have the public participate in each step of the planning program.

The first step is research, Wise said, including land use, zoning and topography; social and economic factors including a population survey, economic base of the city, and the tax base of the community; public facilities and utilities, and transportation.

An analysis research data, the second step, involves discussing the findings with city and county officials, civic organizations and other interested groups to clarify development trends, and standards of development which might be applied to guide future growth.

Reasonable Standards
Reasonable standards, he said, must apply to land use, transportation and public facilities. "The key to anything in planning," Wise said, "is a decision or a series of decisions," and a definition of objectives is necessary.

The third phase would be actual planning, including residential areas, industrial tracts or other major employment areas, commercial facilities, utility requirements, schools and other public facilities, such as parks and playgrounds, and streets, highways and other forms of transportation.

Wise suggested that a general plan might include what should be accomplished in a five-year period, during an "intermediate" period, and the long range plan.

Ultimate Test
"The ultimate test of a plan," he said, "lies in the manner in which it is carried out and executed." Zoning ordinances, subdivision ordinances and a capital improvement program are the three primary tools available, he said.

Wise pointed out that once a plan is standard, it is necessary to use forethought as it is carried out.

The long range plan may be changed as new techniques, new developments and other factors might influence the community's growth.

An important part of any program is fiscal capacity, Wise said. Some communities include a time element in the general program, and if possible the program should be geared to the budget of the area. He noted that in many cases communities found it necessary to have a bond issue to initiate an over all program.

Financing Development
Wise discussed two means of financing development of a plan. One is through state assistance for cities under 25,000 population, and the other is through federal participation in developing plans for metropolitan urban areas.

Wise estimated the cost of a planning survey in the Rogue valley about \$27,000 on a "thumbnail" basis. Research, discussions and preparing recommendations probably would take between 12 and 18 months. He said the cost might be considerably lower depending on how much work already has been done regarding arterial streets, zoning regulations, aerial mapping and other factors in developing a plan.

Half the total cost under the federal metropolitan urban plan would be financed by the federal government, with the remainder of the cost financed by the governing bodies concerned, Wise said.

In the Rogue valley, Wise

said, the joint planning commissions of the county and the cities would have to determine whether or not the area needs a long range, comprehensive plan. Once that is decided, planning consultants may be retained to develop a plan and recommendations. Any plan developed, he said, would necessarily be flexible for unexpected developments in the economy which might affect growth.

Wise said an urbanized area should, when financially feasible, have available a trained planner, especially in a growing area.

The purpose of the planning consultant, Wise said, is assisting planning commissions and local staffs in an initial effort to

bring all factors into one overall program.

Wise pointed out that a consultant can "say what is good and what plans have worked elsewhere," but any particular plan would have to be amended to the community involved.

Wise discussed problems which arose in other areas where he and his associates have developed general plans, including

Tulsa, Okla., Palo Alto, Calif., Hayward, Calif., and in Santa Clara county, Calif. Generally, the problems are all similar, he said, but each community is different because of economic factors, type of soil which influences agricultural development, and topography as it affects drainage.

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