



SOUTH CENTRAL REGION
5655 LSU AG ROAD
ST. GABRIEL, LA 70776

PHONE# 225-642-2044
FAX# 225-642-0844
www.lsuagcenter.com

Research and Extension Programs
Agriculture, Economic/Community Development,
Environment/Natural Resources,
Families/Nutrition/Health, 4-H Youth Programs

White Paper of the Deliberative Forums on Saving Agricultural Lands with Citizens of Farming Communities of Tangipahoa Parish

By Deborah C. Cross
South Central Region Area Agent – Community Economic Development
LSU AgCenter
Monday, April 18, 2005

What is a Deliberative Forum?

National Issues Forums bring people together to talk about important issues. They range from small study circles held in peoples' homes to large community gatherings modeled on New England town meetings. Each forum focuses on a specific issue such as illegal drugs, Social Security, or juvenile crime.

The forums help people of diverse views find common ground for action on issues that concern them deeply. NIF forums are structured deliberative discussions, led by trained moderators. Using nonpartisan issue books, participants weigh possible ways to address a problem. They analyze each approach and the arguments for and against.

Who were the Participants?

The participants were land owners in the parish. They represented the following commodities: forestry, cattle, dairy, and horse. The participants were informed of these meetings through circular letters sent to all agriculture mailing lists. The letter asked these groups to participate to learn of their feelings and ideas on future growth in Tangipahoa Parish. There were two deliberative forums held in Tangipahoa Parish, One was held in Amite at the LSU AgCenter meeting room, and the other one was held in Ponchatoula at Ponchatoula High School at one of the agricultural class rooms. A small group of people were present at each meeting and the comments made from each meeting represent the participants that were present. A total of twenty-one participants participated in the two forums.

Each of the participants were given 4 approaches to deliberate and a pre-post test was also given to see if their preferences had changed from the beginning of the meeting and the ending of the meeting after the approaches were discussed.

The approaches used during the meetings were:

Option 1: Re-establish the Free Market- Unencumbered and Uncontrolled Growth

- The free market and private enterprise should determine the use of land. Private property owners ought to have the right to determine the use of their land without government interference.

Option 2: Protect Farmland and Open Space - Controlled Growth

- Prime farmland and open space areas should be protected from uncontrolled urban development. The government and the private sector should step in to save these resources for future generations.

Option 3: Redevelop Central Cities -Towns

- Blighted core areas of central cities (and rural main streets) should be rejuvenated. This would slow migration to the suburbs and lessen the urban development pressure on farmland and open spaces.

Option 4: Manage Growth on the Rural-Urban Fringe- Allow Growth but Use Governmental Controls

- Incentives and subdivision design standards should be established to encourage developers to increase population density in new developments, protect prime farmland and open space, and utilize public resources more efficiently.

What responses from the participants?

- The participants give these responses to the 4 options:

Option 1- Free Market

- Make own decisions about land use (as long as it is in reason)
- Lack of Regulations
- Create external influences
- Reserve the right to say NO
- Changes in the community
- Sell some farm land
- Right to use property as long as does not create a nuisance
- Make own decisions
- Extra regulations
- Less taxes
- Reestablish free market or keep it
- Maintain constitutional rights
- Regulations increase cost of doing business
- Local control

Option 2- Protecting Farm Land- Open Spaces

- So much farmland is being developed need for setting restrictions
- Sentimental value, will never sell
- Everyone has the right to use their own land, provided it does not create an nuisance- do not punish with zoning
- Protect farmland
- Maintain constitutional rights

- Local control
- Farmland should be protected
- Incentives to replant open spaces with trees
- Who defines farmland and open spaces?
- Should be bonified farmland
- Financial incentives to keep land in farming
- Time frame on easements (10 years, etc.)
- Landowner choices may become limited
- Development and sustainability of the farm and timber markets

Option 3- Redevelop central cities-towns

- Habilitate people
- Quality neighborhood
- Raise property value and rent
- Local people, local control-regulations
- Tax incentives to repair/redevelop existing buildings/structures with city limits
- Mobile people- movement near interstate(s)
- High cost to redevelop cities/towns
- Small businesses put out by larger stores/businesses
- Price to travel/commute may encourage shop/stay closer to home
- Perception of better life in rural communities
- “Free” international trade makes foreign farm products cheaper than locally grown (government needs to collect excise taxes)
- Plans made by larger cities affect nearby communities

Option 4- Rural – Urban Fringe

- Extra regulations are expensive to enforce and unnecessary
- Maintain constitutional rights
- Local control
- Regulate minimum size of homestead acreage
- Need balance of growth in fringe
- Fringe residents may be receiving public services and may not be paying taxes for services (homestead exemption)
- Growth along highway corridors are inevitable if not managed

What common concerns were most apparent?

- The participants were concerned about the movement of city people to the rural areas and not knowing about the best management practices for the farming industry in their area.
- The participants stated that there is a need for incentives for farmland to stay farmland.
- The participants want the state to collect the excise taxes such as the ones on crawfish that is not being collected.

Trade-offs most participants would accept?

- The participants have found that so much farmland is being developed; therefore there is a need for setting some restrictions to help farmers keep farming.

Participants would not accept.

- 85% of the participants stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that owners of private lands should be forced to sell their land if the sale of the property represents the least expensive development alternative for community.
- 90% of the participants stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that owners of private property should be forced to sell their land if it is consistent with a regional comprehensive land use plan and prevents sprawl at other locations.
- After the forums 52% of the participants stated they disagreed or strongly disagreed that a community land use plan is the best method for allocating land use because it prevents leap from development and incompatible uses on neighboring parcels compared to 23% before the forums.

Participants identify shared directions for action.

- The participants all agree or strongly agree that some farmland and open space areas are unique and should be protected from urban development.
- 90% of the participants also agree that land use policy should encourage incentives to manage growth in rural-urban fringe areas.
- 76% of the participants think that land use policy should protect more prime farmlands and open space from urban development.

These findings represent only the views of the 22 people who attended these meetings and should not be generalized to all agricultural land owners in Tangipahoa Parish. The findings do, however, represent important ideas and the kind of core values that are often commonly held.

The Deliberative Forums were sponsored by the following agencies:

[LSU AgCenter](#)

[Tangipahoa Future Network, Incorporated](#)

[Capital RC&D](#)

[Florida Parishes Social Science Research Center at Southeastern Louisiana University](#)

[Ponchatoula Agri-Science Department](#)

Information compiled and written by:

[Deborah C. Cross](#), Area Agent, Community Economic Development, LSU AgCenter

PHONE: 225-642-2044

FAX: 225-642-0844