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Demographic Futures as a Guide to Planning: *California's Latinos and the Compact City*

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Demographic Futures as a Guide to Planning

California's Latinos and the Compact City

Dowell Myers

Demographic futures are proposed as an empirical and normative guide for planning. Projections of demographic change help planners prepare future-oriented plans that are better targeted to the needs of a changing clientele. As an example, population changes in California highlight the growing importance of Latinos to the development of more compact cities. Demographic futures also entail normative interpretations of future scenarios as much as they do empirical relationships projected into the future. Several alternative stories are related of Latinos' future situation, each highlighting different value premises, problems, and conclusions. To effectively use demographic futures, planners must be conversant with both projected trends and competing interpretive stories.

The overarching purpose of planning is to meet the needs of residents in communities more effectively. As the nature of planners' clientele changes over time, so must the plans themselves. Effective planning and policymaking require us to think prospectively about changing demographics. At a minimum our "current" data are always out of date. By the time the 2000 census data are released in detail, it will already be 2002 or 2003. Unfortunately, relying on such *uncurrent* data continually places our understanding behind reality.

Even an accurate picture of the present is hardly enough. So often we forget that projects or plans designed today will not yield their intended benefits until a future date. Who will be the users at that time? In effect, we should aim our plans to satisfy the needs of the future population, not the people we know from the present or the past.

Demographic futures—which include population projections, detailed descriptions of changing characteristics (population analysis), and normative interpretations—have special advantages for planners. They direct our attention to the future residents of the community and keep our attention focused on people as the object of planning. Not only does population analysis keep planners focused on the changing *needs* of residents, but

it also provides much needed insights about likely future *impacts* for which we should prepare. Planning analysts regard population statistics as integral to virtually all aspects of planning. Indeed, it has been argued that the changing population profile of a community should provide as central a context for planning as does the land use map (Myers & Menifee, 2000). Just as land use underlies most planning activities, so do changes in the number and types of residents. There are direct consequences for all planning functions: housing and neighborhood planning, travel patterns, commercial development, employment patterns, parks and recreation, schools, health care, and virtually all activities that occupy space or impact land use patterns.

Despite the obvious importance of demographic change for planning and policymaking, substantial disagreements surround the *interpretation* of ongoing changes. In fact, it is the very importance of those changes that leads to such disagreements. Since the changes are so multifaceted, they lend themselves to many different stories of the future, each emphasizing a different aspect of change, each interpreted from a different value set, and each emphasizing different policy responses. Thus, demographic futures constitute more than a simple prediction of the changing population; they amount also to a construction of the changing identity of planners' clientele and an assessment of the urgent priorities for policy attention. Even with a single scenario of population change, given the diversity of viewpoints among various stakeholders, multiple demographic futures will always exist.

How well can we know these demographic futures, and how should they be judged? Political commentators, scholarly analysts, and outspoken citizens alike all thrust competing interpretations in planners' paths, making it difficult for us to proceed with a clear sense of direction. Current theory holds that planning is a collaborative process (Innes & Booher, 1999) in which planners cannot sweep aside these alternative stories in favor of a single choice, but must take account of them all. A humble description of the planner's role in shaping these demographic futures is Throgmorton's (2000) "skilled-voices-in-the-flow" of persuasive argumentation over problem definitions and proposed solutions. An important skill planners can bring to the table is expertise in assembling, arranging, and interpreting demographic projections. General projections of growth and change are a useful starting point and become the basis for several different stories about the future. With increasingly detailed information, the extravagant range of competing stories may be narrowed considerably, but there remain clear dilemmas about which planners must be versed. Through their keen insights on demographic change, planners can participate directly or indirectly in the authoring of alternative stories of demographic futures.

California: Population Growth and a Changing Base of Residents

These points are well illustrated by the urban planning issues that surround the changing population of California. The state's rapid growth and the predominance of Latinos[1] in that growth provide a clear example of the value of demographic futures. The central challenge faced by planners in California is how to incorporate 15 million additional residents over 30 years time. These newcomers are different in several characteristics from the more established population. These population changes are occurring at the same time that the state is wrestling over desired urban development patterns, a choice roughly characterized as compact cities versus urban sprawl. As will be shown, the growing Latino population may have a special role to play in building more compact cities. However, the urban lifestyles of Latinos are embedded in a host of other controversies regarding economic polarization and pluralism, cultural assimilation, upward mobility, and consumer sovereignty, each of which has been made the center of an alternative story of the future.

California faces critical questions with regard to its future. Demographic futures are an essential component of the intelligence base needed to plan the future. The transformation of California's population indeed should be the central element in all plans in the state.

The Tidal Wave of Growth Ahead

Recently prepared official state projections foresee an increase of 15.5 million Californians between 1990 and 2020, rising from a base of 29.9 million in 1990 (California Department of Finance, 1998). The latest projections yield lower expected growth than the previous round of projections prepared in 1993 because the earlier series did not take into account the impact of the unusually deep 1990s recession. Nonetheless, even under these lower projections, the magnitude of currently foreseen growth is tremendous.

Disagreements frequently arise over the desirability of growth in California, but no significant challenge has been mounted against the empirical likelihood of this projected population growth. Few are surprised by the projections, because California was already growing by around 5 million residents a decade in the final quarter of the last century. Based on standard cohort-component methodology, the State of California projections are prepared with a high degree of professional competence. A recent evaluation compared these projections to those

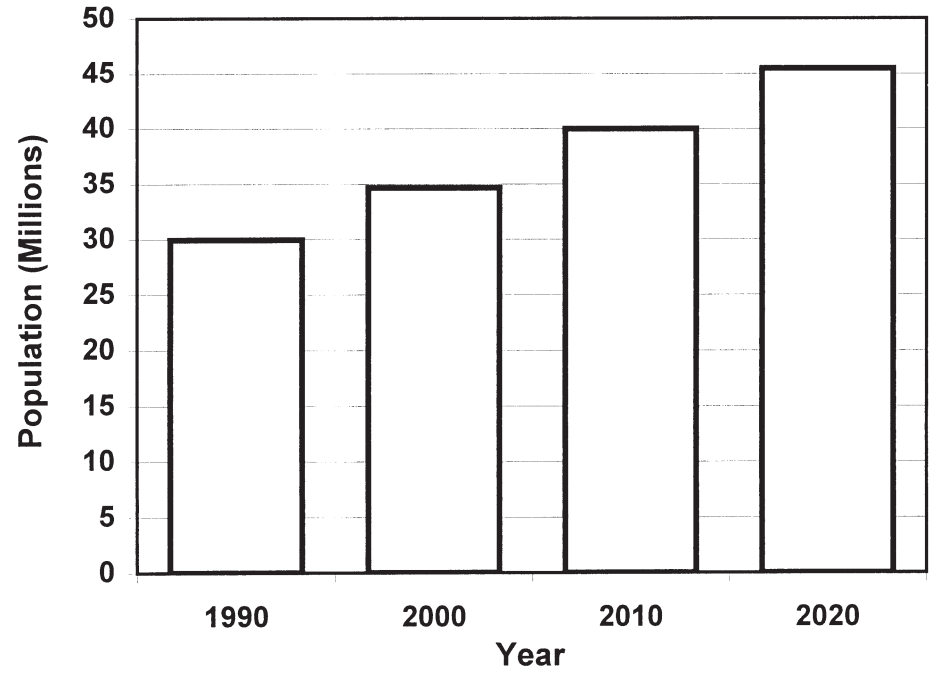
issued by a number of other organizations and found that the State of California projections lie in the middle of the alternatives, very close to the U.S. Census Bureau's own projections for the state (Johnson, 1999). Of course, all projections are subject to great uncertainty, especially when time horizons extend forward a decade or longer, but it remains useful to have a single set of numbers around which planners can coordinate and synchronize activities (Keyfitz, 1987). Indeed, the California Department of Finance projections are required by state law to be used as the basis for all state and local planning.

The prospect of adding 15 million additional residents between 1990 and 2020—a 50% increase in population—has planners in California transfixed. "How are we to accommodate so many new residents?" they seem to say. If the newcomers will have the same needs as each of the 1990 residents, that would imply a 50% expansion in all services and facilities. Viewed another way, within a span of just 30 years California's borders must house an additional population the size of Florida's, which in 2000 was the fourth largest in the nation. One third of the way through this growth period, California's track record of accommodating this growth is dismal, as will be described.

Who Will the Residents Be?

The first question planners need answered is: Who will be the clientele for their plans of the future?[2] The simple answer that most seem to grasp is that in California the number of people will be *more*. As depicted in Figure 1, an already large population is envisioned as grown much larger. In this view, everything will continue as before but will need to be scaled proportionally larger in capacity.

Yet that simple view of growth ignores dramatic changes taking place *within* the population. The clientele of planners is rapidly changing, undermining presumed patterns of needs and shifting traditional expectations of impacts from growth. Thus, there is a second set of answers to who the residents will be in California. More than just being more numerous, they also will be different in their characteristics. Among other factors, differences in race/ethnicity, nativity, and age composition are all significant in California's changing population.



Source: USC Demographic Futures Database[2]

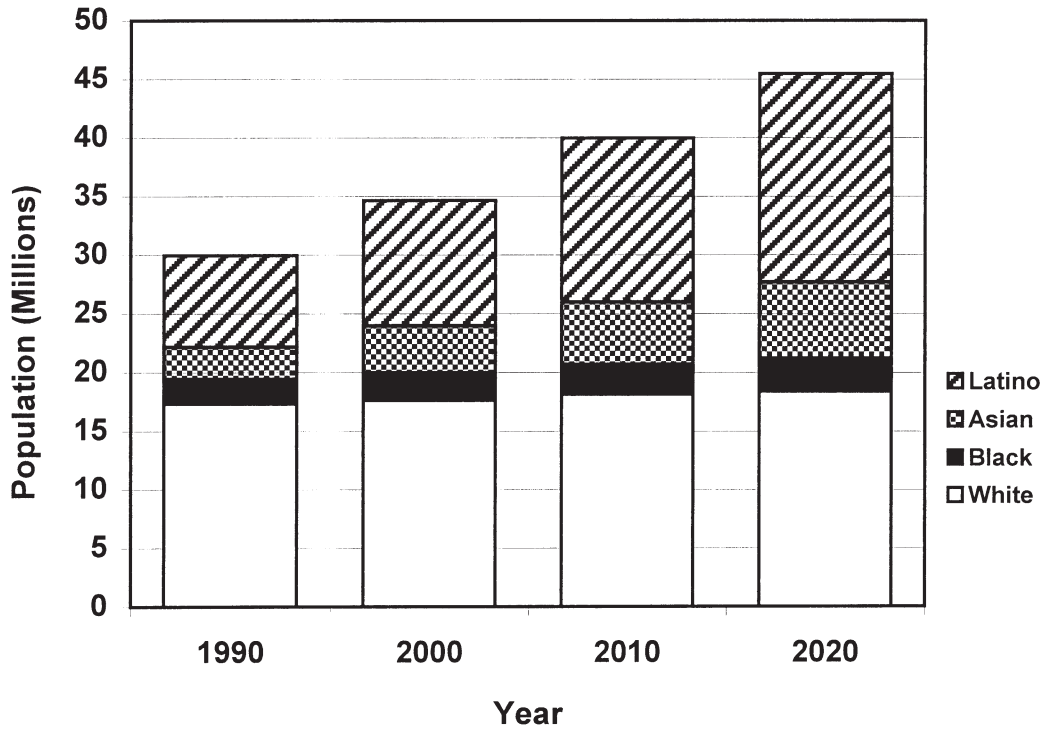
FIGURE 1. California population, 1990–2020.

Race/ethnicity. Figure 2 illustrates how the different racial/ethnic groups will comprise very different portions of this growing population. Both White and Black populations will grow slowly, but their numerical increases will be dwarfed by that of Latinos, whose share of all growth from 2000 to 2020 is projected to be 65.7%. (Asians follow with 22.9% of all growth.)

Nativity. Rapid immigration to California has expanded the foreign-born population. The new arrivals each decade are added to a growing stock of previously settled immigrants. Figure 3 illustrates the native-born and immigrant shares of the population each decade from 1990 to 2020. The foreign-born population steadily mounts over time, as does the native-born population (many of whom are the children of those immigrants). The relative ratios of the different groups' sizes change markedly over time. Between 1990 and 2020, the proportion of the state's population that is foreign born will have expanded only slightly, from 22% to 24% of the total. At the same time, the proportion of all the foreign born who are new immigrants (fewer than 10 years in the U.S.) will have declined from 50% to 22%. As shown later, differences between new immigrants and settled immigrants have great significance for urban development patterns. In 2020, the great majority of these foreign-born residents (51.7%) will be Latino and another 33.4% will be Asian.

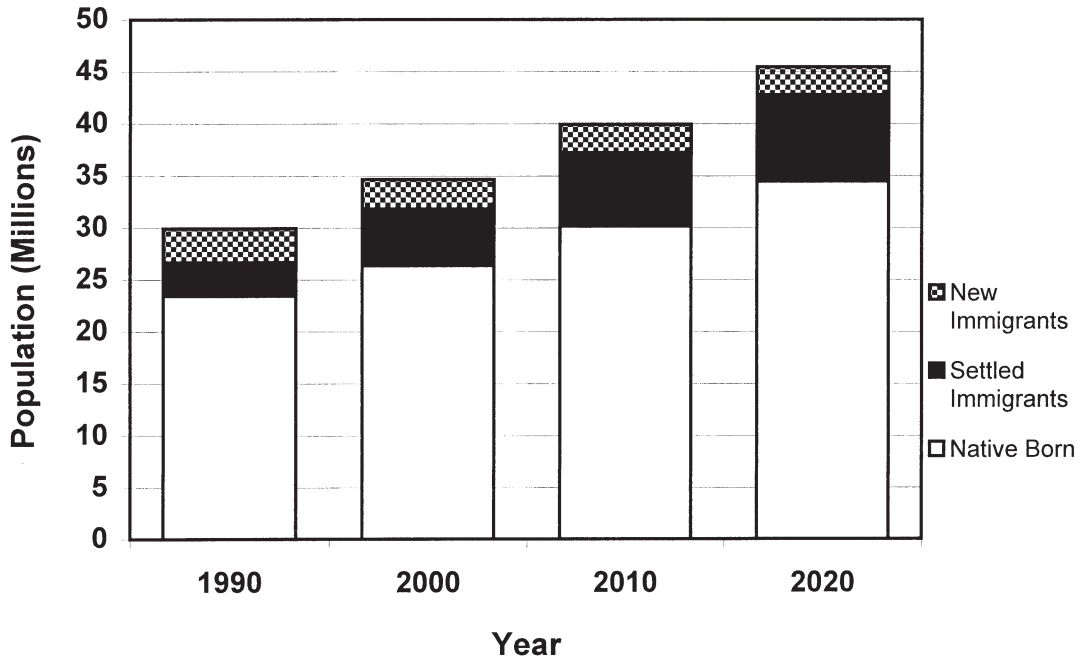
Age. A different perspective on the changing composition of the population focuses on the racial/ethnic makeup of different age groups. Figure 4 displays the number of Californians in 2000 of four racial/ethnic groups in each of four broad age ranges: 0–19, 20–39, 40–59, and 60 or older. The differences were substantial. Although the nonLatino White population greatly dominated the older age groups, under age 40 the number of Latinos surged upward, and under age 20 it equaled the number of Whites.

This translates into some awkward imbalances. Whereas Whites made up only 37% of public school children in 2000, they comprised an estimated 73% of voters



Source: USC Demographic Futures Database[2]

FIGURE 2. Racial/ethnic makeup of California population, 1990–2020.



Source: USC Demographic Futures Database[2]

FIGURE 3. Immigrant makeup of California population, 1990–2020.

in the November 2000 election.[3] Thus older, White voters are deciding questions about the future of the ethnically diverse younger generation. Planners are often caught between politicians who cater to the present electorate and citizen advocates who urge attention to a broader population base (Myers & Menifee, 2000). Planners may wish also to represent the residents of the future, and analysis of demographic futures can help expand the awareness of decision makers on this issue.

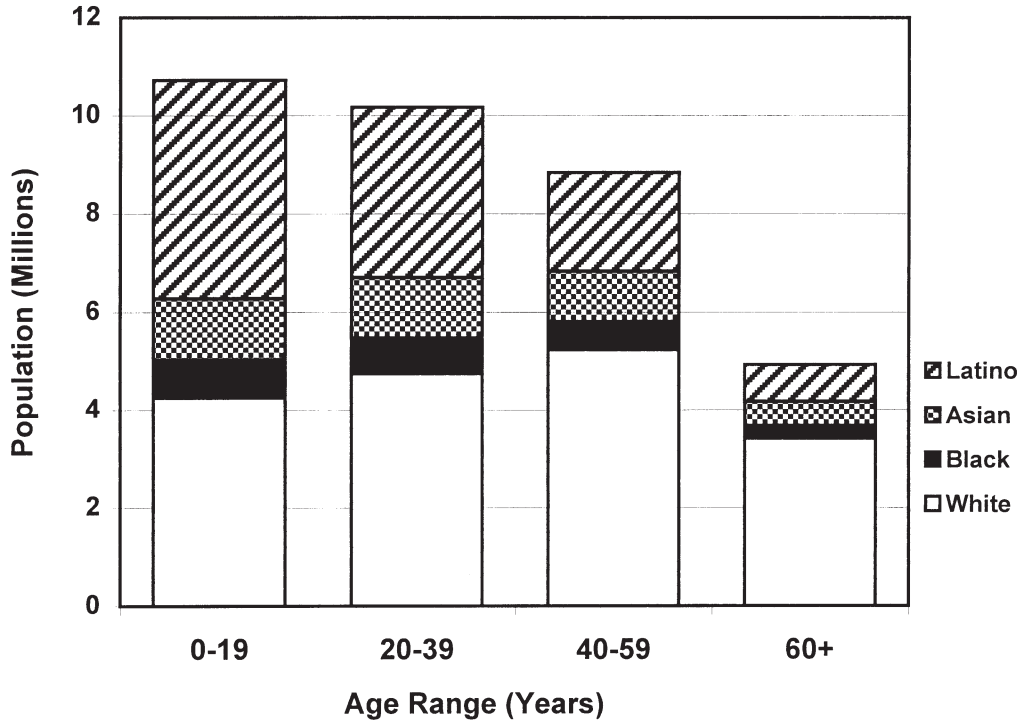
Overall. Summing up, we could say that the future of California is the future of the Latino population. At present, many would say that this future is one of economic gloom. As a group, Latinos are characterized by high poverty, low education, and low-skilled occupations.[4] Whether those disadvantages will persist among future generations of Latinos in California is a critical question. Also important to planners is how the urban planning impacts of Latinos might change in the future. For these and other reasons, the status of Latinos is important not only to Latinos but also to their fellow residents with whom they will share resources.

Building Cities for Future Residents

Currently the prospects for the future look muddled in California. An alarming shortage of housing and a mismatch of housing with population needs have generated a widespread perception of crisis. At the same time, environmental and quality-of-life concerns are creating a surge of support for new urban forms that emphasize compact cities and sustainability over the traditional pattern of sprawl. Surely the state is in transition, both in its population base and in its planning goals and desires. From the current disarray, a consensus may yet emerge. A key element of this resolution could be the role of the growing Latino population in leading the way to more compact cities.

Lagging Housing Construction

One third of the way into the 1990–2020 growth period, California has been very slow to expand housing, transportation, or other services to accommodate the needs of its growing population. Most alarming is the low level of housing construction during the decade of



Source: USC Demographic Futures Database[2]

FIGURE 4. Racial/ethnic makeup of California population by age range, 2000.

the 1990s. For the decade, building permits averaged around 100,000 per year, far below the expected level. To meet projected housing needs would require construction of 220,000 units per year from 1997 to 2020 (California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2000). Such a level of residential construction has rarely been achieved in any single year since 1970 and has never been sustained for more than 2 consecutive years, let alone 23! More than a problem of production capacity, such an acceleration of construction would constitute a sharp break with the slow development patterns to which citizens and elected officials have grown accustomed in recent years, and many would appear reluctant to embrace such a sharp increase. Especially troublesome is the decline in the construction of multifamily housing. Whereas multifamily housing maintained a 45–48% share of all construction in each of the preceding three decades, during the 1990s its share of an already-diminished production fell to 24% (Construction Industry Research Board of California, 1990–1999). This decline runs counter to the population changes underway in the state, and the shortage forces the burden of finding affordable housing onto renters. The continuation of a relatively high level of single-family housing construction sustains homeownership opportunities for better-off residents, but it also encourages lower-density development. Although smaller lot sizes in single-family developments certainly can help to increase densities, only a shift toward more apartment construction can substantially increase development densities and lead to more compact cities.

Compact Cities or Sprawl?

Given the enormity of the projected population growth, planners have been searching for the most efficient means of coping. Sentiment in California has been growing against continued reliance on low-density development patterns characterized as sprawl (Bank of America, 1995). The solution favored by many citizens and planners is to encourage more compact development

in housing. This solution goes hand-in-hand with increased emphasis on public transit in urban areas across the state. Although there is no shortage of land for construction in most counties, a high-density urban pattern is more easily serviced, consumes fewer resources of many different kinds, and is presumed to be more sustainable.

Others have resisted this prescription, arguing instead that the great success of low-density residential development in the state is the pillar of the American Dream and should be celebrated, not denigrated (Wells Fargo Bank, 1996). Academic scholars are divided on this matter as well, with some calling for changed development patterns, others pleading the efficiency of present consumer decisions (Gordon & Richardson, 1998), and many claiming the need for more information (Crane, 1997). Meanwhile, lower-density development continues apace for political as well as market reasons. Despite the merits of apartment construction, citizens and local officials who govern land use on specific sites remain reluctant to approve developments at higher densities.

Latinos and the Compact City: Key Indicators

Even without the creation of high-density housing patterns, California's population growth is increasingly supportive of compact cities. The Latino population, which comprises the bulk of the growth ahead, has a propensity for lifestyles that are compatible with compact cities. This is evident from three key indicators: mean persons per household, multifamily housing, and compact commuting. *Mean persons per household* (average household size) is important because larger households require fewer separate housing units to accommodate the same size population. Residence in *multifamily housing* (apartments) allows higher densities of housing units so that a higher level of multifamily residence implies fewer acres consumed by the same size population. *Compact commuting*—travel to work by public transit, bicycle, or walking—indicates closer connections between home and work and is most compatible with compact cities.

Data on these indicators were collected from the 1990 census Public Use Microdata Sample file for the State of California. Table 1 compares Latinos to non-Latinos and to all residents in the state. Indicators are also compared between native-born and foreign-born Latino residents, as well as between immigrants of varying durations in the U.S. (arrivals in the 1980s, 1970s, and before1970). Data are reported for all households, for all commuters, and separately for those in households of below average income ($20,000 to $25,000) and above average income ($50,000 to $67,000). The two income selections are introduced as a control for income differences between the various population groups and as a means of inspecting demographic differences at higher and lower income levels.[5]

Data Analysis

Comparison of Latinos to nonLatinos. Household sizes were substantially larger for Latinos than nonLatinos, implying that more than one-third fewer housing units are required to house the same number of Latino residents than nonLatinos. The same difference held at both higher and lower income levels, suggesting that the household size differential is not a simple function of

TABLE 1. Key indicators of compact-city lifestyle in California, 1990.

	Mean persons per household			% households in apartments[a]			% compact commuters[b]		
	All incomes	Income $20,000–$25,000	Income $50,000–$67,000	All incomes	Income $20,000–$25,000	Income $50,000–$67,000	All incomes	Income $20,000–$25,000	Income $50,000–$67,000
All residents	2.80	2.62	3.15	30.5	41.2	19.9	8.5	12.5	5.9
NonLatino	2.55	2.22	2.92	29.1	40.0	19.9	7.2	10.6	5.3
Latino	4.01	3.98	4.50	37.2	45.5	20.3	13.1	16.7	8.6
Native-born	3.21	3.03	3.64	28.6	38.4	16.3	6.8	9.0	4.5
Foreign-born	4.57	4.50	5.45	43.4	49.4	24.7	17.1	19.9	12.5
1980s immigrants	4.77	4.59	6.29	63.2	66.3	45.2	24.2	26.4	18.3
1970s immigrants	4.98	4.86	5.78	41.6	47.0	22.9	12.5	13.9	9.6
Pre-1970s immigrants	3.89	3.79	4.66	25.2	28.7	14.0	8.5	11.3	7.0

Source: 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993)

a. Householders 20 years and older

b. Workers 20 years and older who commute by public transit, bicycle, or walking

poverty. Instead, it is likely a matter of custom among Latinos to live in larger family groups. Similarly, more Latinos than nonLatinos lived in multifamily housing. As shown in Table 1, 37.2% of Latino households lived in apartments, versus 29.1% for nonLatinos, a ratio proportionally larger by more than one quarter. Taken together, these two indicators show that Latinos tend to live in residences that are substantially more compact than those of nonLatinos.

The proportion of Latinos in multifamily housing differs sharply by income level. Whereas 37.2% of all Latinos lived in apartments, that was true of 45.5% of lower-income households, but only 20.3% of higher-income households. Moreover, the higher prevalence of Latinos on this indicator seems to dissipate when income is controlled. This suggests that apartment living may be less a preference and more a necessity for Latinos. Nevertheless, as long as Latinos have lower than average incomes, their residences will be concentrated in apartments.

Turning to the commuting indicator, Latinos were nearly twice as likely as nonLatinos to commute to work by public transit, bicycle, or walking (13.1% versus 7.2%). At higher incomes this compact commuting behavior decreased but was still half again as likely for Latinos as for nonLatinos (8.6% versus 5.3%). Thus Latinos' commuting behavior reinforces their residential behavior in supporting compact-city lifestyles.

Comparison of native-born to foreign-born Latinos. We now compare the compact-city lifestyle indicators of native-born and foreign-born Latinos. A large share of Latinos in California are recent immigrants whose characteristics shape the averages for all Latinos. Yet, over time, as new immigrants become longer settled, their lifestyles may change accordingly. Incomes also tend to rise as immigrants settle in, and that may contribute additional changes that planners should expect.

As Table 1 shows, foreign-born Latinos had much larger household sizes than native-born Latinos, and the more recent immigrants had the largest sizes of all. These differences did not decrease when income was controlled. If anything, they increased. In part this may reflect stronger cultural preferences for large families among the newcomers. It also may reflect the younger age of newcomers and their likelihood of having children still living at home.

The foreign-born were also much more likely to live in apartments than the native-born. In fact, the native-born Latinos' rate of apartment residence was below even that of nonLatinos, with or without income controls. The newest immigrants showed the highest rate of apartment residence by far (63.2% overall, 66.3% at lower incomes, and 45.2% at higher incomes). In contrast, the longest settled immigrants had apartment residence rates well below those of nonLatinos. Thus we conclude that Latinos' predominance in apartment housing is driven entirely by immigrants of fewer than 20 years residence in the U.S. The data suggest that most of the longer-settled immigrants' departure from apartments is associated with increasing duration of residence at the same income level, while a small additional contribution is associated with rising income, if in fact they are able to move to higher income.[6]

Finally, with regard to commuting behavior, foreign-born Latinos were more than twice as likely as the native-born to practice compact commuting. As with apartment residence, native-born Latinos' rate of compact commuting was below even that of nonLatinos, with or without income controls. The highest rate of compact commuting was again that of the newest immigrants (24.2% overall, 26.4% at lower incomes, and 18.3% at higher incomes). Among the longest-settled immigrants, compact commuting declined sharply but remained above that of nonLatinos. Again we must conclude that Latinos' predominance in compact commuting is driven largely by immigrants of less than 20 years residence in the U.S. Most of longer-settled immigrants' departure from compact commuting is associated with increasing duration of residence at the same income level, while a small additional contribution comes from rising income, should they be able to advance to a higher income.[7]

Competing Stories of the Future

The preceding analysis shows that Latinos dominate California's population growth and that Latinos lead lifestyles more compatible with compact cities than do nonLatinos. They occupy fewer housing units relative to their population size and live more often in apartments, requiring less land for their housing. Latinos are also more likely to be compact commuters. Accordingly, not only the sheer magnitude of California's population growth but also its makeup argues for more compact development in the future.

Competing stories, however, have been proposed about California's future and the role of Latinos. These stories describe alternative futures by relying upon sets of facts that overlap one another but selectively draw attention to particular facts and valuations (Cole, 2001). The role of Latinos in developing compact cities is necessarily cast within these broader interpretations. Each has substantial adherents, and without agreement on a single story of the future to guide planning, it is difficult to gain consensus on key decisions that will alter the status quo.

Four alternative versions of California's demographic future are outlined here and can be labeled for conciseness as:

1. economic polarization,
2. growing assimilation or splintering multicultural norms,
3. upward mobility and arrival in the middle class, and
4. the tyranny of consumer sovereignty and the longevity of housing decisions.

All of these stories of the future share some elements, but they emphasize very different plot lines and interpretations, making the stories powerful for channeling the debates and focusing areas of discussion. Compact cities and the desirable role for Latinos are viewed differently in the context of each of these interpretations of the evolving future.

Economic Polarization

More than racial and ethnic composition is changing in the population. A deepening polarization based on unequal income distribution (Reed, 1999) and poverty (Johnson, 2000) is mounting in California, a problem first recorded by Ong (1989). This deep economic division is founded on highly unequal rates of educational attainment, largely associated with differences between immigrants and others (Johnson, 2000). At the same time that California boasts higher than average college completion rates—26.4% of adults age 25 and older with a Bachelor's degree, versus 24.4% in the nation as a whole—it also claims one of the lowest high school completion rates—19.9% without a high school degree versus 17.2% in the nation (Day & Curry, 1998). Thus, the state is building a polarized labor force concentrated at both the high and low ends of the skill ladder. This polarization is attributed to economic restructuring, globalization of the economy, and employers' readiness to exploit a low-wage labor force drawn from neighboring Mexico (Scott, 1996).

Overall, growth appears more rapid in the bottom than the top segment, and the shift in California has been quite rapid. Throughout the mid 1980s, California's poverty rate was lower than the nation's (12.7% versus 13.3%), but then it surged. By 1996–1998, even after recovery from the recession, the poverty rate stood at 16.3% while the nation's was 13.2%. The growth in impoverished people creates a context that planners cannot avoid.

The scenario of a shrinking middle class and a growing poor class intersects and modifies the compact-city scenario. Construction has continued apace for single-family homes, enabling homeowners to maintain their established lifestyles, but it has plummeted for multifamily residences, as discussed above. This pronounced shortage of multifamily housing undermines the compact-city vision of high-density development. Instead, the shortage requires renters with lower incomes to double up in even higher-density households. Thus California's housing development is polarized, with one population segment, largely Latino, following the compact-city vision via high household densities, while others continue with traditional residential patterns.

Growing Assimilation or Splintering Multicultural Norms?

This polarization confuses planners about what are appropriate responses, making it difficult to respond to California's demographic future. Anthony Downs (2000) recently warned that shortages of housing in California are leading to higher household densities, which he calls tantamount to building slums. In all likelihood, selected population groups such as recent immigrants would be segregated in those slums. Alternatively, Pader (1994) views the trend toward higher household densities as culturally acceptable to the occupants and would likely decry the use of "slum" to describe these ethnic neighborhoods, following the ethnographic tradition of Gans (1962). Going further, Lisa Peattie (1994) has argued that a large increase in slums is even desirable if we are to provide an adequate supply of very-low-cost housing that is affordable to very-low-income residents. She bases that conclusion on her studies of informal settlements in Latin American cities where large poor populations must be housed. This idea is difficult for American planners to accept, because most ascribe to a norm of middle-class standards for all.

The debate about California's future is about the appropriate norms to use when evaluating the desirability of current and future development patterns. Immigration from other countries forces planners to confront questions long forgotten. The current planning ethos of equality is rooted in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, which struggled for equal opportunity for Blacks. By virtue of their long co-residence in the U.S., Blacks and Whites share very similar cultural values despite differences of color. In this context, any observed disadvantages for Blacks were attributed largely to institutional or economic barriers, not cultural differences.

The case of immigrants is very different. Consider the matter of high school dropouts in California: Is this a deficiency of school districts or local communities? Vernez and Abrahamse (1996) observe that relatively few of those in California who have not completed high school can be classified as dropouts. The great majority of those reported in the data are recent immigrants who

were never enrolled in California schools. Nor can they be said to be dropouts from Mexican schools when completion of the 8th grade is the norm in most of that country. Surely an 8th-grade education is a disadvantage in the U.S. economy, but on whom do we place the blame for this, and what is the remedy? From a multicultural perspective we are likely to reach a different conclusion than from the assumption of a single standard.

Crowded housing highlights the dilemma for planners. If the situation is not viewed as a problem by the affected cultural group (Pader, 1994), should planners still treat it as a problem? In a multicultural planning context we may have multiple norms that create complex situations of intergroup relations. More than the enhancement of individual well-being, planning is focused on the management of relations between neighbors, and the "overcrowding problem" must be judged by these external implications as well (Myers et al., 1996). When neighbors hold different norms about crowding, noise, and other elements of lifestyle, planners' jobs are made more difficult.

In an earlier era of massive immigration, the emphasis of planners and local reformers was on Americanization, a process that instilled a common civic culture and a common set of norms. Peter Salins (1997) recently has reminded us of the great virtues and success of this American assimilation story, a lesson cast aside by the multicultural movement. Assimilation facilitates integration of dissimilar groups in intimate circumstances where differing lifestyle norms would clash. But in other respects, assimilation may be detrimental to the success of immigrants in America.

An earlier version of assimilation theory assumed that cultural assimilation was a prerequisite to upward mobility of immigrants and their entry into the middle class. Recent scholarship has challenged that theory (Hirschman et al., 1999), pointing out, for example, the economic strengths of ethnic enclaves, the superior medical health and family relationships in immigrant cultures, and the hazards of assimilation for some groups. A new "segmented assimilation" model holds that immigrant youth are at risk of gravitating to oppositional cultures maintained by native-born minorities, thereby fitting into America, but abandoning stronger values promoting success that are held by their parents and their native culture (Zhou, 1997).

In this new era, greater social tolerance for individual and group differences is already well established in a state as diverse as California. What is less certain is how planners' adherence to a single normative standard might need to be altered. In the effort to maintain equality and to appear "color blind," planners have avoided addressing this issue. Multiculturalism would argue that those who prefer compact cities should live so, while those who prefer low density should be allowed to pursue it.

Upward Mobility and Arrival in the Middle Class

A third story of California's future emphasizes the strong upward mobility that carries immigrants to reduced levels of poverty and increased rates of homeownership as they live longer in the state (Myers, 1999). Although Latinos on average are characterized by low education and income, that is partly due to the large share who are immigrants. Emphasizing the improvements foreseen, one political commentator's report, "The Emerging Latino Middle Class," was widely embraced for its optimistic message (Rodriguez, 1996).

Of course, the upward-mobility story of the future downplays the fears cited in the competing story of polarization. The more likely future contains a mix of both, with upward mobility softening initial class divisions, but with a long-term persistence of relative disadvantages. Similarly, the story of arrival in the middle class emphasizes assimilation over multicultural differences. Again, the more likely future contains elements of both, with new arrivals to the middle class retaining many of their ethnic distinctions.

The upward-mobility story conflicts with visions of compact-city lifestyles as well. As discussed with regard to Table 1, immigrants tend to abandon their compact-city lifestyles as they live longer in California, regardless of changes in income. At present, compact-city living is highly dependent on the large share of new immigrants in the population. In fact, one study found that 42% of all the transit commuters in southern California had lived in the state less than 10 years, and if they traveled by automobile like native-born people of the same race/ethnicity, transit ridership would be decimated (Myers, 1997). In fact, the evidence shows that Latino immigrants do begin to travel and live in apartments like native-borns after a decade or two. Because in the future a smaller share of the population will likely be newly arrived immigrants, upward mobility will erode the current client base for compact cities. If planners seek to build more compact cities in the future, they will need to incorporate the middle class and the native born in that vision.

The Tyranny of Consumer Sovereignty and the Longevity of Housing Decisions

The residential choices of rich and poor, no matter the cultural group, are both a cause and an effect of the urban environment. Planners' suggestions of desired changes in development patterns are often met with a

story of the future that stresses the wisdom of incremental, individual decisions. In this story, no foresight is needed about future needs because the market will adjust when the time comes. In general, this argument assumes that what is needed in future plans is simply more of the present.

This argument in support of the development status quo often invokes a respect for the principle of consumer sovereignty: Let the consumers tell us what kind of housing they most prefer, not planners, architects, or social visionaries. This principle assumes that individual consumers know best which products will meet their needs within their budget limitations and that the products available in the market are more or less dictated by consumer preferences.

In reality, consumers may have scarce opportunity to express their true preferences for new housing production. First, the full range of housing options may not be provided for selection. Political resistance to high-density development makes it far more likely that developers will offer low-density options to those who desire new homes. In addition, past and current subsidies for infrastructure make some forms of development cheaper for consumers than others, distorting the choices they would otherwise make. Thus, government involvement in the provision of housing has already diluted the purity of consumer sovereignty.

Seen from a future perspective, unfettered consumer choice might even prove undesirable. Unlike personal items such as clothes and food, housing choices have major public impacts. Individuals' choices of new housing today echo long into the future, affecting many future occupants of the same units, along with other residents in the community. Advocates of consumer sovereignty do not realize how much weight is placed on the preferences of a very small minority: *Only 1%* of households in California each year occupy newly built housing (whether owned or rented), and it is that small minority whom developers are serving, not the majority of residents (Myers, 2000). Given the great durability of housing, most housing consumers must live in recycled housing that was built to meet other people's tastes.

It remains an open question how well those who seek out newly built homes and apartments represent the rest. New home purchasers likely have a strong preference for newly constructed, never-occupied homes (Myers, 2000). To gain the exclusivity of first-time occupancy, and at the lowest possible costs, they may be willing to trade off many other advantages, accepting longer commutes to the urban periphery and complete dependence on automobiles, while also foregoing the activities of established communities. These buyers impose a "consumer dictatorship" with collective disadvantages. Their initial preferences for personal housing units aggregate into an overall development pattern that then survives for decades afterward. Thus the preferences of a few are forced on the rest long into the future.

When planning the future, we need to be aware of all the ways in which consumers' choices are managed—by development regulations, supplier preferences, and the legacy of past consumer choices. We need to be aware of all these elements, because the housing construction of today will have a very long legacy. Blind faith in consumer sovereignty is not a prescription for a better future; instead, it enslaves the future to an incremental, shortsighted vision of the present. There is much to be said for maintenance of continuity, but far better that continuity be the result of choice rather than the playing out of unrecognized and potentially harmful forces.

What Methodology for Gauging the Future?

If the preceding arguments about the future are good "stories," but hardly constitute the proof needed to plan the future, what real methodology can be employed? In fact, the stories *do* constitute the proof, something Throgmorton (1992) has called "persuasive storytelling about the future." These stories provide a narrative that ties together many different facts and values, making sense of the complexity for the benefit of decision makers. They embed facts drawn from focused analytical studies prepared through careful use of both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Census Data and Demographic Projections

Planning and policymaking rely largely on quantitative arguments about "how many" and "how much." At the core of planners' investigations of the future lie census data and demographic projections. Census data leave out much detail, such as information on the attitudes and values of residents, but they provide an indispensable backdrop for assessing the future. For this use their most important quality is consistency of measurement at different points in time, thereby allowing measurement and assessment of trends. Census data are also valued for their comprehensive coverage; there is no other source of data that offers so complete a record of the population, its housing, its employment, and its use of transportation.

Closely coordinated with the census data on population size and characteristics are population projections. This dimension of the future is better known than any other, in part because of the great predictability of the aging process, and because of other predictable life-cycle-related population behavior. In fact, planners may

have taken population projections too seriously, by assuming that mechanical projections are both accurate forecasts and descriptive of desirable futures. Instead, Isserman (1985) has warned that planners should "dare to plan," and take the projections simply as tools for evaluating possible futures. Within feasible limits, different futures can be made to come true, but as Wachs (2001) cautions us, we must beware the abuse of projections that are quietly adjusted to achieve political ends. Planners need to become much more sophisticated in the use of projections than they have in the past if they are to reclaim their leadership of the future.

Demographic or Economic Identity?

An unforeseen stumbling block for planners may be their excessive reliance on philosophy and methodology derived from economics (Markusen, 1998). As discussed above, belief in the purity of consumer sovereignty and the wisdom of current decision making together create a sense of false comfort with regard to the future. Economics as a discipline has a very weak temporal orientation, underrepresenting both the legacies of the past and the needs of the future. Its strong point is rational calculation in the present. However, without bringing future needs into stronger focus in the present, we cannot be sure that our present calculus will serve the future well.

Planning and policy analysts with economic training are quick to ascribe an economic identity to the residents of the future. Residents' behavior is assumed to be driven foremost by command of economic resources and the relative prices of alternative goods. In principle, that may sound reasonable, but the evidence usually reflects very different dynamics. More often, as Table 1 shows, population analysis reveals that differences between groups are explained largely by demographic differences such as race, age, immigrant status, and duration of residence. The economic factors are significant at the margin, but demographic factors are useful in the main.

Population analysis also holds advantages for describing distributional consequences. Under economic methods, the greater transit use and higher-density residential patterns of some groups might be explained partly by lower income. That view could be claimed to be egalitarian because it assumes that all people are equal in their preferences and behaviors but for the matter of income differences. However, emphasis on income as causation diverts attention from the fact that income is not equally distributed and that very different outcomes are experienced in different segments of the population. For example, Latino immigrants often arrive in the U.S. with a bundle of characteristics, only one of which is low income. To "control for" these other factors is to explain away much of their identity. Rather than focus solely on causation, direct examination of population groups reveals the richness and complexity of their urban experience.

Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods

Quantitative arguments usually rely on an interpretative narrative that creates a story to make sense of the numbers (Rein & Schon, 1977). Too often in the past, quantitative descriptions of population groups and their conditions have been crudely constructed and then interpreted through ill-fitting stories. A means of inquiry newly appreciated by social scientists involves qualitative research methods, but it has been very slow to permeate the applied professions. However, many politicians already have embraced a less systematic qualitative method through their use of evocative case examples of life stories.

Qualitative analysis enables in-depth interpretation of individuals' behavior, self-perceptions, and expressed intents and of the meanings ascribed by the research subjects (Pader, 1994). However, such closely focused analysis typically is confined to current conditions observed in only a small number of instances in a specific location. In contrast, quantitative analysis with census data allows both historical depth and spatial breadth, and it enables comparisons among many different types of individuals in a systematic fashion. Without qualitative research we cannot know what the participants think of their situation; and without quantitative research we cannot know how prevalent is the situation or how it is varying over time and space.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods are useful for understanding demographic futures. And both also depend on narrative for weaving their findings into a convincing story of the future. When systematic qualitative work is coupled to thoughtful quantitative assessments, the resulting understanding can become more broadly persuasive.

Conclusion

Demographic futures are vital for focusing attention on the future clients of plans that are currently being debated. Emphasis on the demographic characteristics of planners' clientele is useful for quantifying how many and what kind of residents will be affected by these plans. The demographic approach has the further advantage of exploiting the unique temporal focus of demography (years, age, duration, cohorts, and periods), something ideally suited to looking toward the future. This stands in contrast to the strengths of other fields, such as the spatial emphasis of geography or the emphasis on income of economics. To date, the demo-

graphic approach has been much less utilized by planners, but then again, planners have also underemphasized the future (Isserman 1985; Myers & Kitsuse, 2000).

Evidence assembled here suggests that the growing Latino population can help planners create more compact cities in California because the same amount of population growth requires many fewer housing units and less acreage among Latinos than among nonLatinos. Latino workers are also much more likely to be compact commuters traveling shorter distances by transit, bicycle, or walking. To some extent the compact-city lifestyle of Latinos is consistent with a story that holds them captive at the low end in a pattern of economic polarization. On the other hand, preferences of Latinos for some aspects of the compact-city lifestyle largely persist despite income controls. Thus we might conclude these are cultural preferences that deserve recognition by planning that respects the story of a multicultural future.

Nevertheless, we also find that Latinos lose much of their compact-city orientation over time. It is new immigrants who are most oriented toward compact-city behavior, and after 20 years of residence in the U.S. their propensity to live in apartments or to be compact commuters declines even below the level of nonLatinos. Only a small part of this reorientation may be due to growth in income, consistent with the story of upward mobility. Instead, the great majority of the change appears due to residential assimilation and adaptation to the main commuter lifestyle in California. This is obviously consistent with the story of cultural assimilation, even though distinct cultural differences may remain.

Finally, the story of consumer sovereignty tells us not to worry about making plans ahead of time. Latinos clearly change their preferences over time, and they should be allowed to select the locations and housing types that best meet their needs at the time. In this story, without strong interventions, any gains of compactness attributable to Latinos may be largely temporary.

Yet planners still must cope with the likely need to accommodate 15 million added residents. With citizens and local officials so reluctant to approve a vast increase in housing construction, planners' dilemma remains. Latinos remain an attractive opportunity to help address this problem.

A central ethical question must be confronted: How much of the compactness desired by planners should be focused on the lifestyle of only one population group? Surely Latinos' upward mobility and integration into the middle class should not be retarded in order to promote the compact city. For the planning of compact cities to be legitimate, participation will need to include non-Latino White residents in the middle class. To do otherwise would be to build a divided city. In forging a new California lifestyle built from multiple cultures, non-Latinos will need to adopt a portion of the compact lifestyle of Latinos. What is required, in essence, is a redefinition of what constitutes the desired middle-class lifestyle in California, so that when immigrants assimilate they have other models than suburban sprawl. For example, the growing movement toward New Urbanist design principles is a significant strategy for making compact cities more palatable to the entire middle class.

Mastery of demographic futures provides an important vehicle for planners to exercise leadership in building the future. Planners have long emphasized the importance of equity and meeting diverse needs. Effective and legitimate plans for the future require knowledge of the changing population mix and the behavior patterns of many groups. This information is a useful contribution to the collaborative planning process and is not likely to be gained from other sources. Planners also require familiarity with the narratives, debates, and stories that are being spun with regard to changes underway in their region. There is no need to choose the one right story; rather, what is required is to be conversant with the many stories within which planning issues are embedded. The future is being forged out of the competition among many conflicting voices. With planners' expert participation, we can help keep the process more informed, balanced, and directed.

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NOTES

1. For the sake of simplicity, the term *Latino* in this article refers to all Hispanic ethnic groups. In California, those of Mexican origin comprise more than 71% of all Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).
2. The data source for the figures in this section is the USC Demographic Futures Database. These data are integrated from two sources. The 1998 population projection series from the California Department of Finance is used as the control totals for an enhanced projection series that incorporates new dimensions for nativity and duration of residence in the U.S. These projections, prepared by John Pitkin (2000), are available at the USC Web site for *The Future of California Housing—Foresight and Policy*, <http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/futures>.
3. Data and explanation are available at the USC Web site for *Dominance of White Voters Despite Ethnic Change*, <http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~dowell/new/whitevoters.htm>.

4. Comparison of California's Latinos and nonHispanic Whites in 1990 shows poverty rates of 23.2% versus 9.2%, high school completion rates of 45.1% versus 85.7% (population age 25 and older), and white-collar workers at 35.7% versus 69.7% (source is the Public Use Microdata Sample file for California from the 1990 census).
5. The median family income in California reported in the 1990 census was $40,559. The category of $20,000 to $24,999 was selected to represent those of low but not very low income. The category of $50,000 to $59,999 was selected to represent households with above average income, higher than which sample size diminishes among Latino immigrants. The wider interval was selected in order to increase sample size.
6. A rough understanding of the relative contributions of income and duration in Table 1 is gained in the following manner: Assuming that all new Latino immigrants arrive in the lower income category (66.3% in apartments), after 20 years additional residence they could shift to the level achieved by the pre-1970 immigrants (28.7% in apartments). If at the same time they were also to shift to the higher income category, the apartment residence rate would drop further to 14.0%. Duration change within the lower income category amounts to 37.6 percentage points, while shifting in addition to higher income produces 14.7 percentage points additional decrease. Thus, duration change alone accounts for about three quarters of the overall change. Even this is an underestimate, because many Latino immigrants arrive at lower income levels and never advance to higher incomes, so that growing duration is the only source of change.
7. The relative contributions of income and duration in Table 1 can be assessed in the following manner: Assuming that all new Latino immigrants arrive in the lower income category (26.4% compact commuters), after 20 years additional residence they could shift to the level achieved by the pre-1970 immigrants (11.3% compact commuters). If at the same time they were also to shift to the higher income category, the compact commuting rate would drop further to 7.0%. Duration change within the lower income category amounts to 15.1 percentage points, while shifting in addition to higher income produces 4.3 percentage points additional decrease. Thus, duration change alone accounts for over three quarters of the overall change, similar to the findings for households in apartments.

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Comment

Thinking about Tomorrow

Bringing the Future to the Forefront of Planning

Linda C. Dalton

Time is a critical dimension of planning: We study present issues, analyze their roots in the past, and propose ways to address them in the future. Myriad definitions of planning explicitly note the field's orientation to the future. The following examples span more than four decades:

> Cities are aware, as never before, of the need for planning their future growth and development. (Menhinick, 1954, p. 423-1)

> We define planning as a process for determining appropriate future action through a sequence of choices. (Davidoff & Reiner, 1962, p. 103)

> A focus on the future and pathways of change over time . . . (Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, 1997, p. 223)

Methods texts and courses devote considerable attention to population projections, economic forecasts, and environmental impact analyses. Debates over the vision of plans—whether long-range, middle-range, or short-range—accept the premise that plans look ahead, and argue instead about how far and to what purpose. Thus, it seems initially curious that Isserman would feel it necessary to issue a call to action in his 1985 essay "Dare to Plan." Myers and Kitsuse (2000) echoed that concern 15 years later: "Current practice in planning addresses the future in ways that are superficial, shortsighted, or hollow" (p. 230).

Why have planners not taken a more meaningful approach to incorporating future thinking in our work? Isserman (1985) issued this indictment: "We make plans as if the role of planning were simply to accommodate what is forecast and ignore the fact that planning can affect the future" (p. 485). Some critics claim that the contemporary focus on planning practice and communica-