

# Land Use Policy and Planning

Resource Dimensions has conducted dozens of land use projects for private, public, and non-profit sector clients across the United States, and in Canada, Mexico, Belize, Indonesia, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. This wide-ranging experience serves all clients better through the exchange of specific information and experiences between communities geographically removed, yet experiencing similar issues. Our projects focus on the complex relationships at the natural resource-environment-land use interface, and a multitude of social and economic sustainability issues facing cities and regions across the nation as they work to plan for inevitable growth. Beyond direct land conservation efforts, we have worked with organizations of all shapes and sizes on: strategic planning, development, and capacity building efforts; building strong public-private and multi-organization alliances; and mediating differences between diverse stakeholders.

From devising sound policies to customizing strategies, we bring a diverse and grounded approach that stems from our real world work, and our unique experience in "pushing the envelope" from the teaching and research environment. We understand the value of community "greeninfrastructure" (e.g., parks, urban gardens, trails and connective corridors, forests, and agricultural lands) and its vital role. Our ability to help find intersects and bring together human and natural systems through our work has made an enduring impact on the long-term sustainability of communities across the nation... and we hold close this responsibility.

## Selected Projects

**Land Consumption Analysis.** *Various clients in over a dozen states.* Resource Dimensions has conducted a variety of land consumption analyses relative to suburban, rural, and exurban growth issues in order to answer an array of questions, such as: "How can current needs and objectives be met while bestowing adequate environmental and natural resources to future generations?" and "What social, economic, and behavioral adaptations are required?" Several analyses have focused on evaluation of regulatory and incentive planning tools for redevelopment and conservation. These analyses have been used to demonstrate potential impacts of current zoning (e.g., service, environmental, traffic, energy, fiscal requirements, etc.) compared against alternatives designed to provide a more sustainable future.



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**Town of Mesilla Farmland Conservation Strategy.** *Mesilla, New Mexico.* Resource Dimensions worked with the Town of Mesilla to develop a strategic farmland and open space plan to protect specific land resources from development. The project included the use of GIS to track and analyze land use change and the conversion of farmland to development between 1967 and 2007. During the course of the project over 20 public hearings and work sessions were held. Elements of the project focused on locating remaining farmland and open space, developing a cluster/conservation development ordinance, working with the public to explain and garner support for the ordinance, providing technical information on conservation easements to landowners, and completing the Farmland Conservation Plan as a supplement to the Mesilla Comprehensive Plan. Shortly after passage of the Farmland Conservation Strategy, a Mesilla farmer sold development rights to a 142-acre parcel to help create the Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park.

**Public Attitudes on Environment and Land Use Conservation in the Western United States.** *USDA Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.* Resource Dimensions developed a three-phased process (including survey instruments and questionnaires) that included 12 focus groups, 210 interviews, and the distribution of 17,000 surveys across the spectrum of general public, government agencies and non-profit organizations throughout nine western states to obtain primary data on public views toward a range of land use, conservation and related environmental issues. The data was used to develop a decision model to extend the application of traditional economics and ecological constraints in facilitating regionally-based landscape-scale decisions and long-term strategic planning for conservation lands. The model developed acknowledges that a complex suite of factors including social value, environmental and land use policies, economics and environmental constraints interact to drive behaviors at the local and regional level.

**Urban Growth Boundary Impact Analysis and Assessment of TDR Program for Community Plan.** *City of Sumner, Washington.* The first phase of this project involved an in-depth review analysis of the sociodemographic, economic, industry/commerce, growth forecast, zoning, soils, and the natural and agricultural resource base of the study area, county and region to establish an understanding of existing conditions in context. The second phase centered on the analysis of Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) regulations to examine impacts on the City's capacity to accommodate future growth. In the third phase of work, two alternate points-based decision-support models were designed to facilitate the ranking and rating of parcels currently outside of the Urban Growth Area (UGA). The frameworks were designed to be easily combined with GIS to quickly screen for parcels viable for UGA inclusion or exclusion, an important element in working to effectively and transparently determine lands appropriate for conservation. In phase four, Resource Dimensions developed an IMPLAN model to estimate the economic impacts to the community, county and region associated with lands at the northernmost reach of the designated community planning area under various development scenarios, to define lands with the greatest likelihood of remaining economically viable for agriculture over the long-term. In the final stages of the study, preliminary guidance was provided on a proposed Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program for the Community Planning area. The assessment was aimed at assuring the success of the program, and prescribed appropriate processes for screening and determining available sending/receiving sites; quantifying supply and demand for TDRs in the market place; and assessing proposed TDR policies. *In association with Investco Corporation.*



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Natural Resources · Economic Analysis · Sustainability Planning · Land Use · Policy Analysis · Regulatory & Litigation Support