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LESSONS LEARNED FROM IDAHO'S AREA OF
CITY IMPACT: A CASE STUDY OF MOSCOW

Research Project

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Table of Contents

Key Definitions	7
Abstract	9
Introduction	11
Growth Management	12
Methodology	14
Data Collection/Analysis	15
Case Study Description: Moscow, Idaho	17
Findings	22
Lesson One: Moscow’s ACI Boundary—Determining Placement and Size.....	22
Lesson Two: Jurisdiction/Representation	24
Lesson Three: Procedure	25
Lesson Four: City and County Relationships	27
Discussion	29
Appendix A: Research Design and Validity	33
Problems and Validity Assurance.....	33
Appendix B: List of Interviewees	35
Appendix C: Interview Questions	36
References	37

Key Definitions

Growth management zone—Encompasses all varieties of the urban-rural fringe that are specifically demarcated as a guide to development, growth, and/or containment. Such zones include Urban Growth Boundaries, Areas of City Impact, Greenbelts, Local Growth Control and Management, and all others that fit this definition.

Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)—A specific type of growth management zone around an incorporated city to restrict urban development and contain growth within a 10 to 20 year period (Knaap & Hopkins, 2001).

Area of City Impact—A specific type of growth management zone in the state of Idaho drawn around cities and towns to protect the environment, ensure utilization of agriculture, and aid in land use planning and development (Idaho Code §67-6501).

Abstract

In the United States, there are many methods of controlling growth and development along the urban-rural fringe. One of the most common methods is to create a growth management zone around a city or town that intends to guide urban development. In Idaho these are called Area of City Impact zones. This study assesses the utility of Area of City Impact zones as a planning tool, through a case study of the city of Moscow, located in Northern Idaho. Data were collected by means of interviews and public documents. The findings highlight four lessons that can be learned from the Area of City Impact: the effects of size on planning, how planning beyond jurisdiction leaves residents unrepresented in government, frustration with a complicated application procedure, and the importance of amiable city and county relationships. The conclusion includes recommendations for improving Moscow's Area of City Impact policy.

Introduction

From the beginning of human settlement, there has been an urban-rural fringe, where urban boundaries transition into rural expanses. In recent centuries, as cities became more industrialized, this area, in order to separate them from concentrated populations, housed many of the less favored aspects of a working city, such as power plants, factories, and sewage facilities. It was also where agricultural uses (*e.g.* forestry and farming) were common, thus creating expanses of open space between settlements and defining landscapes throughout Europe and later the United States. As population increased and cities grew in size, urban sprawl became more pronounced and the urban-rural fringe became a mixture of residential, industrial and agricultural uses. In the United States, the growth of suburbs and the extensive system of interstate highways caused the urban-rural fringe to become less and less defined (Gallent et al., 2006).

The landscape of the American west has changed dramatically over the last 200 years as rapid and continuing in-migration have made it the fastest growing region in the nation, with booming metropolises like Denver, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, and Las Vegas that encourage migration and boost economic growth. It is in this fast-growing society that the need for land use planning arises and where it has the opportunity to become a key tool for cities to define their patterns of growth (Travis, 2007).

A significant component of city growth and sprawl is land conversion, generally from agricultural to urban and residential uses. Land conversion from open space to suburbia at the urban-rural fringe is steadily increasing across the west and planning for land use is an important and ongoing process as populations grow and more land is converted (Lee, 1979). According to

Lee (1979), there are several factors that determine which land parcels will be converted and how the landscape pattern will be shaped. These include physical characteristics of the land parcel, personal characteristics of landowners, site accessibility, regulatory measures, availability of public services, and developer initiative. This study focuses on only one of the conversion factors, regulatory measures. The regulatory measures discussed are growth management initiatives taken by state and local government actors to help prepare for growth.

Growth Management

As cities grow, changes ensue, not all of which are negative. Diversity of residents, economic stimulation, and varieties of goods, services, and housing often accompany growth. There also are changes in landscape patterns—open lands become subdivisions, strip malls and industrial parks emerge at the edge of towns, small private shops are replaced by franchises and chains. Both citizens and governments are challenged with adapting to the change as living styles and service requirements need to be altered to adjust to new conditions (Porter, 1997).

A city can be unprepared for rapid growth if it does not have some spatial plans laid out before the growth occurs to determine where needed structures will be placed. Unplanned growth can cause transportation problems and strains on infrastructure as well as lead to haphazard land use patterns, consumption of open space and farmland, and ecosystem degradation (Porter, 1997). Porter (1997) suggests that “when public officials simply let growth happen, they miss opportunities for creating value in the community, for maintaining important community characteristics, for establishing stability in the development process, and for providing efficient systems of infrastructure for all residents” (p. 7). Planning thus can be viewed as an opportunity to affect the spatial arrangement of land use for future efficiency.

Growth management as a concept can be defined several ways, but at its core is the use of government regulation in a rational, coordinated, and comprehensive manner to balance the economic growth while protecting ecological systems (Stein, 1993). The idea of growth management grew from a desire to control the negative impacts of urban and suburban expansion and still reap the benefits that accompany increased development. It was first applied in an urban context in the 1960's solely as a way to preserve natural habitat. The definition has since evolved to include an administrative approach to guiding development that is both political and technical and draws on traditional planning tools also incorporates social concerns (Porter, 1997; Stein, 1993).

The term “growth management zones” is here used to represent regulatory zones delineated around the boundaries of towns and cities as a method of land use planning to guide development and sprawl, or in some cases contain it. Many growth management methods have typically been state-endorsed, and it is generally the role of local and county governments to implement the actual plans for growth (DeGrove, 1979).

Growth management zones have been implemented in many places across the country as well as around the world. The primary motivations for a city to implement a growth management zone vary, but two main themes are common—the idea that growth in the region is compromising the quality of life for residents, and the belief that growth should be controlled locally (Landis, 2006). Typical growth management statutes are state-wide and require individual localities to plan within and outside their boundaries using zoning and land use planning (Harvard Law Review, 1995). There are two approaches to growth management zones: a centralized, statewide approach, and a decentralized approach where cities decide to implement growth management zones even though it is not a requirement at the state level. One of the most

commonly implemented growth management zones are Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs), but there are several others. Since they were first created in Lexington, Kentucky in 1958, growth management zones have been adopted across the United States and internationally. In 1973, the State of Oregon was the first to require that all cities have a UGB. Similar requirements have been implemented in Washington and Idaho, and several cities have adopted them in California, Colorado, Florida, England and elsewhere (Ding et al., 1999; Travis, 2007).

Growth management zones were created at a time when there was a call for land conversion and urban sprawl to be slowed, and it appeared to be a timely solution to an increasing problem. However, most UGBs and other management zones were only intended, by definition, to manage growth for a period of 10 to 20 years. As most growth boundaries were created in the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's, the time is overdue to assess the effectiveness of the idea. Some cities have modified growth management agreements in the past decades to reflect modern issues, but growth management zones overall may be losing effectiveness (Landis, 2006). This study attempts to garner what lessons can be learned from a case study of one growth management zone implemented in Idaho.

Methodology

The growth management zones in Idaho, called Area of City Impact (ACI) zones, are intended to promote growth management by preparing for growth while protecting the open space surrounding communities, without stymieing economic growth and keeping infrastructure consistent (City of Moscow, 1999). It is often used for developers to integrate projects more easily with the city to avoid problems in the future. Although there is abundant literature on the subject of growth management zones, there has been little research done on the state of Idaho's

Area of City Impact zones system. The research here is an attempt to analyze the Area of City Impact zones and what can be learned from fifteen years of implementation. To address this, the City of Moscow and surrounding Latah County were analyzed as a case study. Specifically, the study looked at how the Area of City Impact zone in Moscow is used as a planning tool to aid in orderly growth of the city. This study has implications not only for the City of Moscow, but also for the State of Idaho. It is important for professional land use planners in the state to recognize the extent to which the ACI zones are having positive or negative effects on the land and community, and what might be done to improve them if they are not meeting the intended purpose. Moscow was chosen as a study site because the mid-sized population and relatively slow growth rate make it easy to observe developmental changes. For research design and validity assurance, see Appendix A.

Data Collection/Analysis

The primary method of data collection was interviews, and examination of government documents, court decisions, meeting minutes, and passed legislation. Interviews were selected as the means for primary data collection because it was possible to speak with a number of professionals in a proportion that would not have been possible in a larger area. The data collected was rich-text data from experienced land use planners and others that work or have worked with the Area of City Impact zones in Moscow or are otherwise professionally knowledgeable on the subject.

Thirteen interviews were conducted with a variety of stakeholders in Moscow and Latah County (see Appendix B). In the City of Moscow, these included two past and present members of the Community Development Department, two members of the Planning and Zoning

Commission, and one City Council member. In Latah County, three members of the Planning and Building Department and two County Commissioners were interviewed. Also interviewed were a developer/land owner, a realtor, and a civil engineer. The interviewees were determined using nominated (or “snowball”) sampling, whereby the first interviewee recommends others that might be useful, the second recommends more, and so on (Morse & Richards, 2002).

Interviewees were asked to recommend people with both the same and differing opinions from themselves. The selection of interviews was meant to capture a variety of perspectives from both the private and public sectors. When recommendations began to repeat and thematic saturation was reached, no additional interviews were conducted. The interviews were formal, semi-structured interviews, with the same questions asked of each interviewee and discussion of other topics was allowed (see Appendix C). The participants were specifically asked about their view of the purpose of the Area of City Impact. This was an effort to examine if there was commonality between government actors and the private sector on its purpose. They were also specifically asked about their opinion of the overall effectiveness of the ACI.

Data was also gathered and analyzed from public documents, including legislation and minutes from policy-makers’ meetings. The purpose was to gather information on why the Area of City Impact zones were created, and their purpose of implementation. Content analysis of the data was conducted by comparing and combining the information gathered from the various interviews and research, using content analysis. Lessons were drawn about the Area of City Impact zones from the comments received from interviews and how well it fulfills the purpose stated in the piece of legislation.

Case Study Description: Moscow, Idaho

To guide development in communities across the state, Idaho established its own statewide growth management initiative, Area of City Impact zones, as part of the Local Land Use Planning Act of 1975. A purpose (among others) of the Act was “to encourage urban and urban-type development within incorporated cities . . . to avoid undue concentration of population and overcrowding of land . . . to ensure that the development on land is commensurate with the physical characteristics of the land” (Idaho Code §67-6501). Cities in Idaho are encouraged to delineate an Area of City Impact zone, defined as a wide area surrounding the city in unincorporated land in the county. Although the Area of City Impact is not a requirement, in order for a city to annex adjacent land there must be an ACI in place, giving incentive for communities to implement an ACI (§67-6526). It is intended to provide a method for cities and counties to agree on development and planning in the fringe area to avoid complications due to growth (Bureau of State and Community Affairs, 1976).

Latah County in northern Idaho had an unemployment rate below the national average by 2% in 2002 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). One reason for this is the University of Idaho and Washington State University, seven miles away in Pullman the two major employers in the region. For these and other reasons, Latah County and the city of Moscow have been experiencing steady growth. Latah County had a 13% population increase between 2000 and 2006, most of it within the City of Moscow (Census Bureau, 2007). The city has a steady growth rate at about 1.5% annually. According to a Moscow city official, there is more housing and residential development than population growth in the city because university students have been migrating to off-campus housing and many other residents are building new houses at the fringes of the community, increasing land conversion to residential uses (personal communication with

author). Thus even if the population of Moscow is growing at 1.5%, the development rate is slightly higher (personal communication with author).

The size and growth rate of Moscow affects the utility of the Area of City Impact as a planning tool. In Moscow, the city is growing at a rate fast enough to warrant the need for such long-term planning, yet growing slow enough that the city and the county have time to adequately create plans in advance for the ACI. One Latah County employee noted this is one reason why Moscow is a good place to implement an ACI. “We just seem to be about the right size for it to work the way we’re doing it” (personal communication with author). In fast growing areas, such as Ada County in southern Idaho, it is difficult for the ACI to stay ahead of development and is not as helpful as a planning tool.

The Area of City Impact in Moscow was not created until 1993. Figure 1 shows the current Area of City Impact zone in Moscow. The ACI is supposed to encompass the areas where the city is likely to grow in the upcoming 15 to 20 years, and it is meant for the city to plan its growth outward in an orderly fashion (Moscow City, 1999). According to the agreement between the City of Moscow and Latah County, the areas within the ACI follow city ordinances, even though they are outside city jurisdiction. Thus, any construction inside the zone must follow city regulations as well as county codes, such as street width and sewer system regulations. As

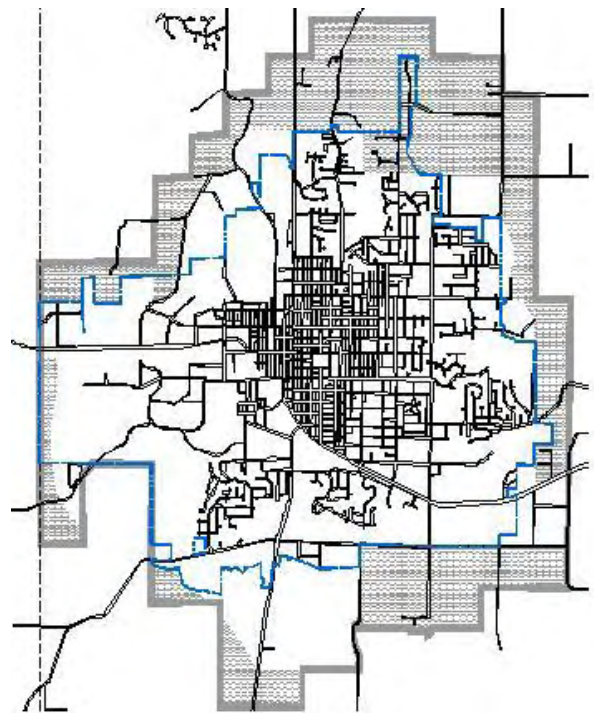


Figure 1. Area of City Impact around Moscow, Idaho. The city border is shown as a blue line, the Area of City Impact shaded gray.

a result, much of what has been annexed into Moscow since the implementation of the ACI, noted a former city official, has had city-ordinance infrastructure associated with it, keeping consistency throughout the city with no need for upgrades (personal communication with author). The city planning director summed it up nicely by stating “[The Area of City Impact] is intended to allow for the orderly extension and growth of the city rather than having an abrupt boundary right on the city limits where you might have very drastic different development standards or land use codes, which then once property is annexed into the city makes it a very difficult or awkward transition for growth” (personal communication with author).

Although the Area of City Impact is intended to guide orderly growth of Moscow, it can also have the opposite effect. This occurs when, for instance, a developer does not want to build according to city ordinances, but does want the convenience of city amenities. The developer may then intentionally plan to build outside of the ACI limit, which, agreed one Moscow city member, results in “leap-frog” development, leaving open space between two developed areas (personal communication with author). This not only is opposite of the orderly outward planning that the ACI is supposed to endorse, but leap-frogging has been shown to exacerbate unnecessary sprawl and faster environmental degradation (Weitz & Moore, 1998).

The Area of City Impact agreement between the City of Moscow and Latah County was revised in 2003, giving the city less authority over the ACI, and reducing the physical boundary of the ACI. Two major events were influential in these revisions. The first was the 2000 Idaho Supreme Court case ruling in *Blaha v. Ada County*. In this case, a subdivision was planned and approved in the City of Eagle Area of City Impact based not on city codes, but those of Ada County Highway District. The Blaha’s, residents in the ACI, argued that because the subdivision was located within the Area of City Impact boundary, it should be legally bound to the city

codes. The court ruled that final jurisdiction lay with the county, and according to the Local Land Use Planning Act, the role of the city is advisory only. Previous to this decision, the City of Moscow exercised authority over the Area of City Impact. Thus, although the area is planned with city codes, the county can override these codes. This case essentially reaffirmed that jurisdictional authority lay with the county instead of the city and required the ACI agreement be renegotiated to reflect this.

According to past and present workers of the city and a realtor, the second catalyst for the revision of the Area of City Impact agreement between Moscow City and Latah County was an application for a particular development project within the ACI (personal communication with authors). The development, Cameron Farms, was planned well away from the city at the far edge of the ACI, nearly a mile from town. The city approved of the development, while the neighbors in the surrounding area opposed it. When the surrounding residents brought their concerns to the county, the county responded that it was a city-approved project and there was nothing they could do to change or stop it. This led to discussion on how the residents that live in the ACI are subject to city ordinances, yet cannot vote for city officials (Moscow City Council, 2002). “So all of these people,” noted a civil engineer, “that felt they were impacted by this, felt they had nowhere to go” (personal communication with author). To the Latah County Commissioners, it became an issue of governance without representation, a very important condition (personal communication with authors).

As a result, there was pressure to minimize the number of unrepresented citizens by making the boundary of Moscow’s ACI smaller. The original boundary, when first drawn in 1993 was nearly a mile width around the city, and drawn heavily along section lines. It was agreed that the mile-wide zone around the city was too large for the 20-year projection of growth

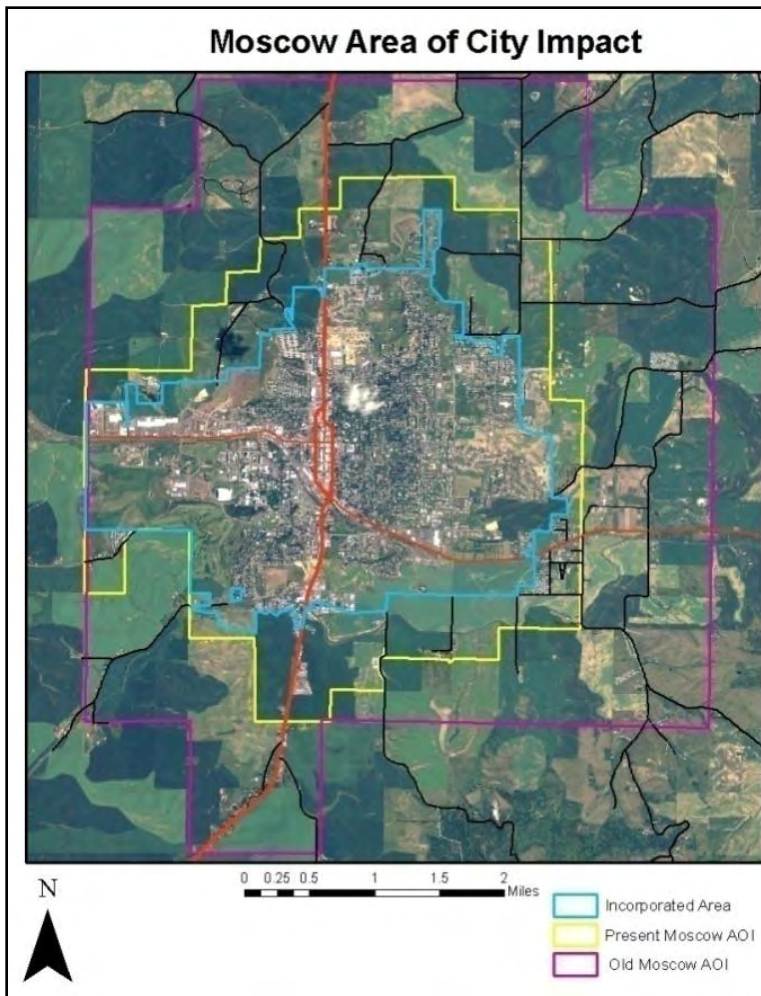


Figure 2. *The old and new Area of City Impact around Moscow, Idaho. The city border is shown as a blue line, the old border is pink, and the current Area of City Impact is yellow.*

of Moscow, and the current 2008 is much smaller. Figure 2 illustrates the size difference between the old and the new ACI in Moscow.

Development projects in the ACI prior to the reduction were built under the City of Moscow ordinances, according to the agreement. When the boundary was brought closer to the city, one outcome was that some of the urban-developed areas were no longer in the impact zone. One Moscow city interviewee noted that this left patches of urban development dispersed in the county that are of a higher density and have built-in city infrastructure framing, a rare land use pattern (personal communication with author). These areas are leap-frog developments that have the potential to cause sprawl in the future.

One unique feature of the Moscow Area of Impact is that it only surrounds three sides of the city, because to the west is the Idaho/Washington state line. The city has no control over what takes place outside of the city on the west side of Moscow, which borders Washington. The ACI is in place for a city to give input regarding things that may impact them, but when the city is abutting a state line the city is vulnerable. As an example, a recently proposed mall to be built directly across the border in Washington, will affect Moscow by purchasing Moscow water and sewer services. Because of the state line, the growth of Moscow can only occur outward in three directions, making it even more important to plan wisely in the Area of City Impact.

Four themes consistently emerged about the Area of City Impact in Moscow: 1) how the size of the ACI affects planning, 2) the effect of jurisdictional issues in the ACI, 3) the effects of a complicated procedure, and 4) the importance of amiable city/county relationships in governing the ACI. These themes and the lessons that can be learned from them are discussed in detail. Recommendations are given in the discussion section.

Findings

Lesson One: Moscow's ACI Boundary—Determining Placement and Size

One theme to emerge from the interviews is the challenge in managing the Area of City Impact in terms of boundary size and regulation of placement. Following of *Blaha v. Ada County* ruling, the county has responsibility to decide the placement of the boundary, with the city giving recommendations only. Members of the city expressed that the loss of that authority was not the intent of the original statute, and that the *Blaha* ruling “really waters down the whole law” (personal communication with author). Some feel that the city planners should have control

over where to place the ACI so they can decide how much space is needed to adequately plan for the growth of Moscow and follow through with the implementation.

In addition to regulating the boundary placement, interviewees discussed concerns with the current size of the Area of City Impact. Some participants felt that after the ACI area was reduced in 2003, it was too small. From the perspective of the city, more area is needed to plan for future growth than what is provided. Interviewees agreed that the original size of the ACI was too large for a twenty-year time span for planning, but the city “felt it came down a little too small for planning purposes” (personal communication with author). There are areas to the east and south in Moscow where the city boundary is close to the edge of the ACI, giving the city little or no space to plan. To the north of Moscow, growth is happening at a slower rate, and the ACI is an adequate size.

An example of the city’s diminished ability to plan is the long-discussed need for a ring-road to divert through traffic on US Highway 95 around the city and bypass Moscow to alleviate the traffic, which runs north-south through downtown Moscow with a daily average of 6,207 vehicles in 2007 (Idaho Transportation Department, 2008). As discussed by Moscow city officials and members of the Transportation Commission, before the ACI was reduced, much of the proposed ring-road was within its borders, and the city could make long-term land use plans for where the ring-road may exist. Now, however, the majority of the ring-road will lie beyond the ability of the city to plan for the land it may consume. As a result, if anyone wanted to buy land and build where the ring-road may be, the city has no authority to prevent them from doing so. The county is not against the ring-road, but cannot guarantee that the land will be planned and put aside for that use (personal communication with authors).

Lessons learned regarding boundary placement and size include issues related to which governing body has ultimate decision-making authority and the effectiveness of the size. It is imperative that counties work closely with cities to ensure that the size is adequate for future needs.

Lesson Two: Jurisdiction/Representation

The Local Land Use Planning Act, via the Area of City Impact, essentially gave cities extraterritorial jurisdiction to plan (Bureau of State and Community Affairs, 1976).

Extraterritorial planning, as the term implies, indicates a governing body making land use plans beyond their jurisdiction. This is the case with Idaho's Area of City Impact zones, which are a means for the city to expand planning beyond their borders into immediate county land. Daland (1954) contends that extraterritorial planning can be helpful for small cities that are planning for growth on its boundaries. He claims that "if [extraterritorial power] can be used to prevent unregulated growth and satellitism, a most useful purpose will be served" (p.238).

There are many views about the jurisdiction of the Area of City Impact. The Idaho Statute does not clarify whether jurisdiction should lie with the state or the county. In general, there is the view among those interviewed that the ACI is intended as a tool for the *city* to plan, therefore the *city* should have the final decision on projects in the zone. Before the Blaha court ruling, this was the case. One Latah County Commissioner stated: "That judge's ruling really screwed things up from the original intent, I think, of the Impact Area" (personal communication with author).

One weakness with extraterritorial planning is that those living outside the boundary are the most affected by the city ordinances, yet are not represented in the city government. The

residents living in the Area of City Impact must be considered. A realtor stated “They’re under city ordinances and they’re under county ordinances so they get hit from both sides” (personal communication author). Those living or building within the ACI are held responsible for city ordinances yet have no right to vote for city officials. Because of this, the Supreme Court decided in *Blaha v. Ada County* that the county has final jurisdiction. Democratically, this is a criticism with extraterritorially planning for an area, regardless of how small it might actually be.

This is one reason why the Area of City Impact is complex. There is the need for the city to have control over the area to be able to effectively plan for future growth and development, yet residents are subject to ordinances for which they have no power to vote for or against. Therefore, extraterritorial government should be used only as a transition zone that would eventually lead to annexation. In this way, cities would have some control over the pace and pattern of growth outside their boundaries of areas that would eventually become part of the city (Daland, 1954). This is also the case with Moscow’s ACI zone—it is intended to aid the transition of land parcels being annexed so infrastructure remains consistent (City of Moscow, 1999).

A lesson to be learned regarding jurisdiction and representation issues is that the county and the city need to be aware of those living in the Area of City Impact zone and cognizant of the fact that they are being governed without representation.

Lesson Three: Procedure

One of the most confusing aspects of the Area of City Impact agreement between the City of Moscow and Latah County is the application procedure for building. The current procedure for land use change “includes (1) an applicant making application to the County, (2)

the County transmitting the application to the City, (3) the City providing recommendations, and (4) the County conducting a public hearing on the application” (Moscow City, Latah County 2003). To clarify, an applicant must first make a request to the county, who then sends the application to the city. The city will then make recommendations to the county, and the county will ultimately decide the outcome. As can be expected, there is a lot of frustration for anyone who is unfamiliar with this procedure. A member of Latah County Planning and Building stated “It’s kind of a challenging area to jointly administer. Just from the people we’ve spoken with who’ve called us about concerns they have who live in the Area of Impact, they’re a bit confused about who responds to their inquiries” (personal communication with author). An employee of the city had a similar comment when asked about how long it would take for people to get angry about the complicated procedure, which was “sometimes only about five seconds” (personal communication with author).

This complicated procedure to apply to build in the Area of City Impact is a negative outcome of the ACI agreement. There is an increase in time and resources needed in order to process requests. A property owner felt that applying to the city was a step in the process that was generally unnecessary, because the county makes the final decision (personal communication with author). If, for instance, a large developer (or anyone) desired to build something that the city would likely not approve, nothing prevents the developer from sidestepping the city all together and making a case directly to the county. But without the city’s input, the purpose of a joint agreement is undermined. A member of the city suggested the process be modified so that applications are reviewed by one government, instead of both the city and the county (personal communication with author).

A lesson learned regarding the current system for application is that it is a frustrating and time-consuming experience to be reviewed by two government bodies.

Lesson Four: City and County Relationships

One of the most important factors in determining how efficiently an Area of City Impact will be is the extent to which the city and the county work together. Since both a city and a county work together in growth management, Innes (1993) and DeGrove and Metzger (1993) argue that coordination between these two government agencies is required for successful growth management. The Area of City Impact zones are an example of this “horizontal consistency.” Development that occurs within the ACI affects both the city and the county, making it imperative that they work together on growth management strategies (Innes, 1993).

Problems can be minimized if the county and city officials openly communicate about planning in the Area of City Impact zone (Bureau of State and Community Affairs, 1976). Several interviewees mentioned that without good relations between the two groups, “There’s a potential for it to really break down” (personal communication with author). The ACI is a *joint agreement* between the two entities, and that term implies that there is consensus on the provisions. Otherwise, as one former city official stated, “If you have County Commissioners that their philosophies are different than city council, at any given time, they just both do what they want to do anyhow. I mean, if they don’t get along, they don’t get along, and that certainly happens from time to time” (personal communication with author).

The City of Moscow and Latah County planning officials argue, that if the views do not match, and the county approves a development that the city does not approve, then the ACI is not effective (personal communication with authors). Even when the city and the county have similar

views about growth and management in the ACI, with our system of government the agreement may not last as public officials are constantly changing when electoral terms end. A County Commissioner agreed, stating “It’s complicated it by putting two governmental entities together to try to make them work together, when every few years you change the players” (personal communication with author).

One of the benefits of the ACI mentioned by a Latah County employee is that it compels the city and the county to work together on certain issues; otherwise City of Moscow and Latah County do not have reason to openly communicate (personal communication with author). In the case of Moscow and Latah County, respondents agree that current relationships are amiable. The city and county agree on most planning issues, and can work together well (personal communication with authors). In the majority of the applications, when Moscow gives their recommendations to Latah County, the county accepts them, and the agencies have a positive professional relationship. In most cases, if the county does not take the city’s recommendations it is the result of a public hearing. Therefore, it can be argued that in Moscow, the ACI is being used as it was intended, as a planning tool to aid in orderly development. This gives the city a little bit of control over what is happening beyond the border to what will eventually become part of the city.

A lesson learned regarding the relationship between the county and the city is that the Area of City Impact agreement is only as good as the relationship that exists between the city and the county. This is a potentially tenuous relationship given the constantly changing player. Therefore, it is important to have explicit procedures and agreements in place that will not change based on the desires of newly elected officials.

Discussion

In review, The Area of City Impact in Moscow was created as a transition zone between the city and the county as a growth management tool. The ACI is governed under city ordinances, yet as the area is out of the city boundary, the county has final jurisdiction on decisions. This study primarily used interviews to determine what can be learned from the ACI after fifteen years of its operation. The four lessons that this study brought out from Moscow's Area of City Impact are, in summary:

- 1) The size of the Area of City Impact in Moscow was reduced to a size that is too small for the long-term planning that is needed for projects such as the ring-road.
- 2) Extraterritorial planning, although useful as a planning tool for cities, leaves residents unrepresented, and is best used as a transition zone, as it is in Moscow.
- 3) The complicated procedure for land use change causes frustration among applicants and involves steps that are perhaps unnecessary.
- 4) The relationships between the City of Moscow and Latah County are amicable, and this is important to successfully implement growth management strategies of this caliber.

The professionals that were interviewed had varying opinions about ways to improve how well the Area of City Impact is working. The specific recommendations listed here were gathered and modified from interviews. First, the boundary of the ACI should be reviewed and modified, specifically on the east and south sides of the city. City officials suggested that after the boundary was modified in 2003, it is too small to plan effectively and even some county personnel thought that perhaps it could be expanded in some areas of Moscow. Much of the growth that is now occurring in Moscow is in the south and the east. Development in the south is

nearing the city boundary, and in the east, the development is beginning to abut the city border, and the ACI boundary is near to the city edge.

Second, constant communication between the two entities is necessary to ensure that philosophies are the same and that the agreement is still something that is approved by both. Both the city and the county should codify the agreement in ordinances approved by the city council and county commissioners. Many interviewees mentioned that the current relations between the city and the county are good, and these crucial relationships should be maintained (personal communication with authors). Recommended here is a city/county joint meeting between planners every two or three months (or as often as necessary) to review any cases in the ACI.

Third, interviewees from Moscow city feel that the ACI agreement and the boundary need to be reviewed more frequently than every ten years as is written in the Idaho Statute. The comprehensive plans for both the city and the county could be reviewed on a more regular basis as well (personal communication with authors). The recommendation is to review the ACI agreement every 4 years, and use census and scientific trend data to justify changes.

Fourth, it is recommended that the city and county try to enlist more participation from those residents that live in the ACI as well as those who live near the border within city limits, because these are the residents and landowners who are going to be most affected by change in this area and should be more involved. There is a provision in the Idaho statute that allows for a representative from the residents of the ACI to serve on the city Planning and Zoning commission, which has been the case occasionally in the past but currently there is no one serving that role. It might be useful as well to talk to landowners in the area about their future plans so the ACI agreement can address those plans in advance.

Finally, the last recommendation is to create a third party regional planning authority or joint task force between the city and the county to plan for this area. The Idaho Statute has a provision for this as well. This group could act as a hearing body to plan for the ACI. This would make the legal process easier for those applying for change in the ACI, as well ensure that negative relations between the city and the county will have limited impact on the ACI planning.

Many respondents felt that there are positive aspects to the Area of City Impact, but overall the ACI has only minimal effect on planning in Moscow. As one interviewee from the city succinctly stated, “Is the area of impact a good tool for the city? Not exactly. Is it a tool for the county? Not really” (personal communication with author). When developers consider building, the Comprehensive Plan is more often used than the ACI. Many felt that development in the ACI is close to the city and is annexed, and the ACI is not a factor. One developer stated:

When it used to be the larger area of impact, I felt that it was too large, too cumbersome, and not realistic. Now with the smaller Area of Impact, it seems impractical and useless, because anybody whose going to develop that close to the city is going to annex anyway, so if you’re talking purely about the area of impact and you wanted my personal opinion, I’d say scrap the whole damn thing. (personal communication with author)

Many interviewees concluded that the most ideal alternative to the ACI would be for the city to annex as far out as growth would occur. There is the idea that “if it’s going to be urban development, it might as well be officially a part of the city” (personal communication with author). In Idaho, however, this is a near impossibility. First, there must be an ACI in place before a city can annex, and second, the city cannot annex at will, a property owner must ask for it (State of Idaho Senate, 2002). Therefore, because annexation is not a likely option for

Moscow, some minor modifications of the Area of City Impact are the best alternative to the status-quo.

The Area of City Impact, although not perfect, is “better than the alternative,” stated a Moscow city official “than having at the city limits completely different land use and development codes” (personal communication with author). One property owner stated “We need a direction, no matter how you do it” (personal communication with author). A County Commissioner said similarly that “it’s so critical that whatever we do in that impact area we do it right” (personal communication with author). Regardless of what planning goes into the Area of City Impact, the most important consideration is to make sure it is being planned. It is critical that the ACI be taken seriously as a planning guide for development while Moscow is still growing at a relatively slow rate.

As a final question, those interviewed were asked what advice they would give a different state or community that was thinking about implementing an Area of City Impact. Some ideas were to be specific and justify boundary decisions with data and trends. Others restated the need for a larger area to sufficiently plan. Still others reiterated the importance of keeping sound relationships between the city and the county. One real estate agent said simply: “Bigger maps. More planning . . . I mean, you could just do so much more planning if you were looking at a bigger map.” (personal communication with author).

In sum, although the Area of City Impact zone around Moscow is not without flaws, it is a worthwhile planning strategy for the growth management of the city. This study reviewed the need and purpose for growth boundaries with a case study of Moscow to study Idaho’s Area of City Impact zones. Several themes emerged as a result of interviews that should be considered when implementing a growth management zone in general.

Appendix A: Research Design and Validity Research Design

The research design followed Yin's (1988) design of case study research. According to Yin (1988), case study research is applicable to descriptive studies that are exploring a situation where there are no clear outcomes. The project was a case study with descriptive data gathered primarily from interviews and public documents. Thus this study design offers the ability to analyze in close range the land use planning of the area in the context of the Area of City Impact zones, and case study research is appropriate. Although the findings will be specific to the case, they can be used to compare against other cities in generally similar circumstances. Moreover, the study design can be transferred to future studies in other areas. Because no other study has been done in Idaho, there are many cities and towns in the state that would benefit from a study of this caliber.

Problems and Validity Assurance

According to Creswell (2003), in case study research that relies heavily on interviews, there is a possible external validity threat from the researcher drawing incorrect conclusions or assumptions with the data provided. Complete objectivity was attempted in the course of the study, but it is recognized that this is a difficult task. To alleviate these concerns, member-checking was used to review findings and aid in verification. This was accomplished by sending this final document back to all of the interviewees for their review and ensure their comments were correctly interpreted (Creswell, 2003). With this method of research there is the possibility of bias and exaggeration among interviewees (Creswell, 2003). To alleviate concern over researcher credibility to the participants, the interviewer was straightforward at the beginning of

the interview that this is a non-biased study, without previous notions or ideas about findings.

Also, this study quotes directly from public officials. With this in mind, those being interviewed may not have been candid for political reasons. For this reason, interviewees were assured that information gathered during the course of the interview would not be associated with their identity, thus minimizing interviewees' needs to be guarded in their responses. Those interviewed did consent to have their name listed in Appendix B.

Appendix B: List of Interviewees

Andrew Ackerman, City of Moscow, Community Development Department

Rick Bebee, Welcome Home Property

Bill Belknap, City of Moscow, Community Development Department

Shelley Bennett, Team Idaho

Art Bettge, City of Moscow, Planning and Zoning Commission

Drew Blankenbaker, Latah County Planning and Building

Michelle Fuson, Latah County Planning and Building

Joel Hamilton, City of Moscow, Transportation Commission

Larry Hodge, Hodge and Associates

Jack Nelson, Latah County Commissioner, District III

Aimee Shipman, Latah County Planning and Building

Walter Steed, City of Moscow, Transportation Commission

Tom Stroschein, Latah County Commissioner, District II

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Background information

- ✦ How long have you been working for/with (name of org.)?
- ✦ What is your involvement in planning for the City of Moscow or Latah County? What is your role? How extensively have you been involved?

Defining Area of City Impact

- ✦ What is your understanding of an Area of City Impact?
- ✦ Why was it established for Moscow?
- ✦ What do you think Moscow's Area of City Impact is supposed to accomplish?

Professional evaluation

- ✦ In your professional opinion, is the Area of City Impact effective (does it do what it was intended to do)? Why or why not?
- ✦ Would the City of Moscow look different than it does if there was no Area of Impact in place? How?

Alternatives

- ✦ What (if you think it's needed) would you recommend as an alternative or improvement to the Area of City Impact? Are there any other suggestions or changes you would make?

Hypothetical situation

- ✦ If a member of a different state legislature that was considering implementing a similar plan consulted you, what would you tell them? Why?

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- Map Credits: Figure 1: Moscow City. Figure 2: Latah County