

The Marriage: Planners and Data

Part I: What do planners do?

Planning is a systematic and creative way to **influence** the **future** of a neighborhood, city, region, etc.

Planners respond to social, economic, and cultural challenges by...

- enhancing the quality of life
- protecting the environment
- promoting equity and equality
- guiding growth and development

To achieve these objectives, planners involve stakeholders in decision-making processes, assist communities in creating a vision for the future, **analyze information** to generate solutions to problems, and **present recommendations** to public officials and citizen groups.

Planners Are Information Stewards

- Practical guide for advancement of the city planning movement
- General understanding of city planning
- General acceptance of the desirability of having a city plan
- Cornell University, International Anthology of Conference Papers on Urban Planning 1794 - 1918

Frederick Law Olmsted, 1913 ([Proceedings of the Fifth National Conference on City Planning](#), Boston)

The Evolving Definition of Planning

"...the working out in broad outline the **things that need to be done** and **the methods for doing them** to accomplish the purpose set for the enterprise."
(Gulick, 1937).

"...deciding in advance what is to be done; that is, a plan is a projected course of action."
(William, 1958).

"...a **process**; that is, a continuous activity taking place within a unit and requiring some input of resources and energy in order to be sustained."
(Yehezkel, 1963).

"...any activity centrally concerned with the linkage between **knowledge and organized action**." (Wright, 1980).

"...**the art** of organizing space, science integrating research and **knowledge of various disciplines**, and politics using available means **to achieve specific aims**." (Kozlowski, 1988).

Planners Collect and Organize Data, *then* Communicate Information

Collect --- *Reality* --- *Data*

- Primary data sources (**Field surveys, interviews, and questionnaires**)
- Secondary data sources (**US Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, etc.**)

Organize --- *Information*

- Store and manipulate data (**SQL and Oracle**)
- Analyze data (**ArcView, ArcGIS, Spatial Analyst, SPSS, etc.**)

Communicate --- *Knowledge* --- *Action* --- *New Reality*

- To experts, publics, and clients (**Final critique**)
- Verbal, written, and graphic (**Project deliverables**)

Part II: The Evolving Relationship

- The Planner has changed (**from physical planning to organizing constituents and coordinating programs**)
- The Data have changed (**availability, format, content**)

Focus on Democratic Involvement and Transparency

- Bottom-up versus top-down approach to public participation (**involvement of CBOs and emphasis on local knowledge**)
- Technological advancements have had an impact on planning-related tools (**E-mail, GIS, and the WWW**)

- Efforts to integrate, represent and transmit local knowledge (**neighborhood information systems**)

Process persists...Reality --- Data --- Information --- Knowledge --- Action --- New Reality
