

# ENACT Ecology Reports

Environmental Action for Survival



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## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

The lack of any truly effective long-term planning for the growth of Ann Arbor is evident in the current Briarwood Shopping Center controversy. As has usually been the case in the past, our city government is reacting to outside events and pressures when they are fully developed, rather than taking the initiative and using its powers to influence such events as they develop or even before they develop.

The Guide for Change developed by the Planning Staff is, of necessity, only general in its suggestions. Our complaint is that so far it seems on only to have served as a weak refuge for those opposed to events like Briarwood. "It doesn't fit in with the Guide" has become a familiar cry, albeit an unheeded one. It would seem that the Guide is only being used as a minor factor in consideration of major zoning changes. In our opinion the city should adopt an actual policy governing the growth and development of the city. These policy guidelines should not only be available, but publicized, so that developers could make their plans in accordance with them from the beginning. Although a developer may rightly feel it is unfair for the city to let him go ahead with expensive preliminary plan and then pull the rug out from under him by refusing the zoning change, it is equally unfair for a developer to feel that because he owns or has an option on a property that he has the right to do with it as he sees fit. There must be mutual cooperation and dialogue so

that future construction in Ann Arbor will not only benefit the developer, but the entire community.

We were very interested in public attitudes toward the petition against Briarwood. The most prevalent reason we heard for not signing was that while they were sure it would be a horrible blight on the landscape, a death-knell to downtown Ann Arbor, and an ecological catastrophe, it was sure to come anyway, so why fight it? It is this fatalism which now seems to infect not only much of our citizenry, but also the City Council, which will be responsible for the further deterioration and suburbanization (in the worst sense) of Ann Arbor.

Another worry advanced by non-signers is that if the shopping center is denied, it will inevitably take shape out in the township where the city will have no control over its development. We ask you, is 60 acres of asphalt parking lot controlled development?

If Ann Arbor is to control its change during the coming years, it must have some overall image of its self. Piecemeal zoning changes can fit into such a plan, but there must be some initiative taken by the planning department to encourage desired changes, to take an active role in the location and development of both commercial and residential projects so that they will complement each other and create an enjoyable habitat for the citizens of the city.