

Is it a commodity or resources

Land symposium sparks question of land usage

By MARY LOU CALLAWAY

From an idea born in West Bloomfield comes a newly published book which asks "Is land a commodity or resource?"

"Land in America," edited by Richard N.L. Andrews of the University of Michigan, opens with a preface written by Janet Lynn of West Bloomfield.

Ms. Lynn is the executive director of Citizens Council for Land Use Research (CLURE).

A three-day symposium in Ann Arbor

in 1977, sponsored by the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University, sparked the idea for the book written by 15 experts on land use. Many were speakers at the symposium.

The book is published by Lexington Books of Massachusetts, it sells for \$18.95 at various book stores.

Just a few years ago, the West Bloomfield Library had no book on land use. Now the library has "Land in America" on order.

In 1973, two major events prompted

a new interest in land use.

Literally hundreds of residents protested against a 197-acre shopping center in the Maple-Halsted area. Planning commissioners, who off the record encouraged the center, folded under public pressure and denied the petition.

TODAY, THAT MALL is located in Novi called the Twelve Oaks shopping center.

Before West Bloomfield turned it down, it had met similar opposition in then Farmington Township, now Farmington Hills.

CLURE was in the forefront of the groups which organized to fight the urban sprawl it thought the mall would invite.

From this fight, came CLURE's inquiry into why plans were going ahead to extend Northwestern Highway through the township.

Ms. Lynn raised the first questions, reminding officials on the state highway commission that the federal govern-

ment would require an environmental impact study.

Other groups questioned the necessity for the highway which local officials supported.

Today, although cancelled by the state highway commission, Northwestern still is considered by many to be a possibility although they are talking about alternatives to move the increasing traffic burdens through northwestern Oakland County.

The interest and involvement of local citizens remains high, but this, according to "Land in America," is not unique to one community.

It is a "quiet revolution" throughout America, the book says.

"IF THESE CHAPTERS stimulate the reader to extend the debate, they will have served their purpose well," concludes Andrews. He views land as having unique ecological and economic implications.

Conservationists insist land is a resource, but this ignores our constitu-

tional right to own, buy and sell land freely, writes one of the 15 chapter authors, Fred Bosselan, a Chicago attorney.

"This country is in the midst of a revolution in the way we regulate the use of our land," Bosselan says.

In the forward, Ms. Lynn points out today's headlines reflect the multiple roles played by land. Land is subject to rules, customs and myths inappropriate for 20th century realities, she says.

"People generally assume local zoning, planning and other laws protect their personal property in land and the interest of the community as well," states Lynn.

CLURE is presently working with other groups in Oakland County to

study what she calls "our natural heritage."

"Regulators and owners are natural enemies," writes Frank Popper, a Chicago planning consultant.

Anyone observing West Bloomfield Planning Commission meetings can witness the struggle of viewpoints between planners, homeowners and developers. On occasion, the courts are resorted to for a final determination on land use.

AMONG THE OTHER contributors to the book are a Cambridge University land economy professor, a history professor from Pennsylvania, a Washington writer and land use policy consultant, and William Whyte, known best for his book, "The Organizational Man."

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