

FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT

Generic Environmental Impact Statement on
Urban Development in Minnesota

Developed by the Urban Development GEIS Steering Committee

Submitted to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board
September 21, 2000

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Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Urban Development

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Introduction

The Generic Environmental Impact Statement or “GEIS” on Urban Development is a statewide study mandated by the 1999 Minnesota Legislature and ordered by the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB). The legislation directs the EQB to ...”examine the long-term effects of urban development, past, present, and future, upon the economy, environment, and way of life of the residents of this state.”

The study was ordered because of growing controversy surrounding urban growth and development in Minnesota. This statewide study is intended to provide Minnesotans with objective information and analysis, give them the opportunity to express their opinions and weigh future policy options, and provide a full public examination of key environmental, economic, and social factors surrounding urban development and recommendations based on this analysis.

As required by law, the EQB established an Urban Development GEIS Steering Committee to advise the EQB on the appropriate scope and content of this GEIS. Over 120 Minnesota citizens submitted applications for committee membership; 18 were appointed by the Chair of the EQB to serve in this advisory capacity. As required by law, the committee is comprised of representatives from environmental, development, agricultural interests as well as local government and concerned citizens.

During the period December 1999 – July 2000, the Steering Committee met monthly to obtain and discuss recommendations from a large number of stakeholder organizations, topic experts, and citizens on what the scope and content of GEIS should be. Appendix A provides a complete list of individuals and organizations who participated in this process.

This report – the Draft Scoping Document -- contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Steering Committee with regard to the objectives and content for a Minnesota Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Urban Development.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT GEIS STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<u>Member</u>	<u>Organization/Affiliation</u>	<u>Residence</u>
Thomas Delaney	Chisago County Commissioner	Shafer
Scott Elkins	Sierra Club	St. Paul
Jeff Ewing	Farmland Industries, Inc.	Prior Lake
Michael Fischer	LHB Engineers & Architects	Edina
Nelson French **	Friends of the Minnesota River Valley	Bloomington
Daniel Hunt	HuntGregory Development	Minneapolis
Karen Linner	Center for Energy and Environment	Minneapolis
Joan Marshman	Florence Township Board	Frontenac
Kim McCarty *	Phillips Neighborhood Housing Advocate	Minneapolis
Dorothy Muffett **	Entrepreneur / Management Consultant	Plymouth
Thomas Owens	Owens and Associates	Minneapolis
Rick Packer	Arcon Development	Coon Rapids
Terence Quigley	Shoreview City Planning Commission	Shoreview
Rod Sando *	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Chisago City
Merle Schwartau	Dairy farmer; Planning Commissioner	Red Wing
Russell Susag	Richfield City Council	Richfield
Betsy Wergin	Sherburne County Commissioner	Princeton
Phil Wheeler	Rochester-Olmsted Planning Department	Rochester
Carole Yoho	University of Minnesota	Stillwater

* Resigned – moved out of state

** Resigned due to time conflicts

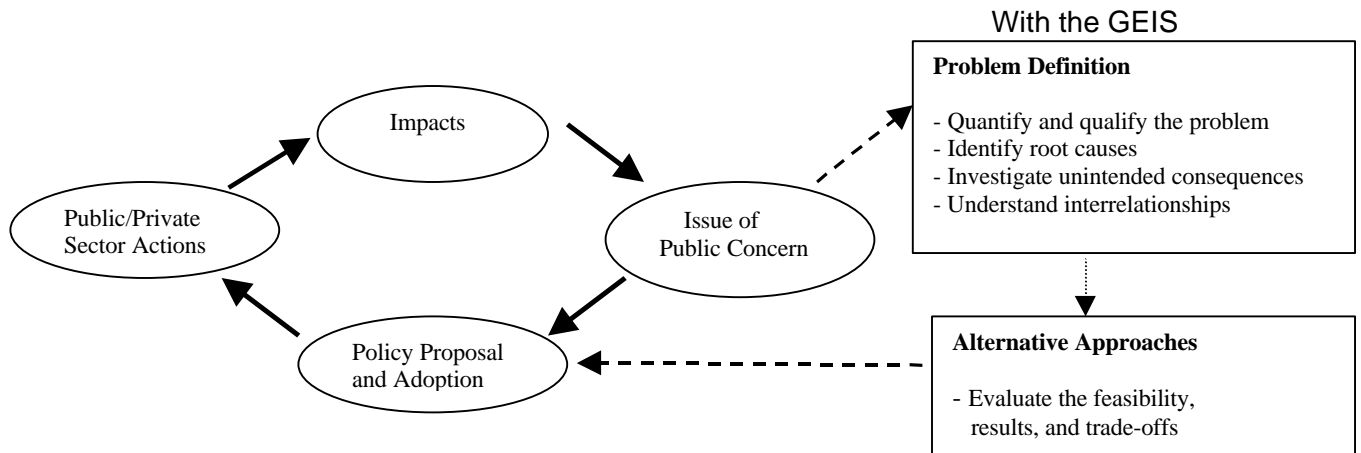
Background on the Generic Environmental Impact Statement

Purpose and Value of a GEIS

The Generic Environmental Impact Statement is an alternative form of environmental review under the Minnesota Environmental Review Program. The purpose of the GEIS as defined in Minnesota Rules, part 4410.3800 is to assess a number of separate but related activities whose aggregate impacts cannot be adequately addressed through site-specific environmental review. Moreover, the GEIS is intended to provide a more comprehensive understanding by investigating economic and social impacts as well as environmental outcomes.

The accompanying diagram illustrates the potential contribution and value of a GEIS to public policy. Government policies combined with private sector actions routinely create impacts that become issues of public concern. Subsequently, new policies are adopted to reduce or eliminate the undesirable impact. This, in turn, triggers new actions and behaviors in the public and private sectors.

Contribution of the GEIS in Public Policy Development



In this public policy cycle, several problems can arise. New policies may be based on an incomplete understanding of the complex cause and effect relationships creating the impact. Policies may be directed at correcting the symptoms of the problem while the root causes remain unaddressed. Finally, new policies may create unintended consequences that result in new types of impacts.

The GEIS is a unique opportunity to address these potential pitfalls and improve the quality of policy-making and decision-making. The GEIS strives to define the problems and relationships accurately and completely through high quality and objective information-gathering and analysis. The GEIS also evaluates alternative ways to mitigate impacts, identifies potential consequences from pursuing these alternatives, and documents the trade-offs that would likely result.

Explanation of GEIS Scoping

The purpose of scoping a GEIS is to reduce the size of the study in order to focus attention on those core issues and impacts that are most critical and significant. Scoping also recognizes the limits of being able to make sense out of vast amounts of information and the inevitable financial constraints that preclude the ability to study everything. It serves to focus GEIS resources on areas where a greater level of understanding and analysis is most important.

This scoping document identifies the proposed GEIS goals and objectives and the type of research necessary to achieve them.

Overview of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Urban Development

Goals and Objectives of the Urban Development GEIS

The overall goal of the GEIS is to help Minnesotans understand the issues and controversies surrounding urban development. To address this goal, the study has the following six objectives:

1. Generate an understanding of the current status of urban development in the state and the demographic and economic trends shaping future urban development.
2. Develop an understanding of the dynamics of urban development -- how market forces, regulatory and fiscal policies, and governance issues combine to create the type of urban development form and impacts recognized by Minnesota citizens.
3. Document the degree and significance of critical environmental, economic, and social impacts associated with urban development with a special attention toward the cumulative effects of impacts and causes of impacts.
4. Evaluate the strategies and alternatives being used to address impacts in order to generate an understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, inherent trade-offs, and unintended consequences of different development policies and practices.
5. Generate recommendations on actions that can increase the benefits and reduce the detrimental effects of urban development.
6. Identify ways to measure the economic, social, and environmental health of urban areas on an ongoing basis and monitor progress.

Definition of Urban Development

In this scoping document, “urban development” is not a specific activity or set of activities but rather a complex and interrelated set of policies and practices influencing how, when, and where urban growth occurs. Policies and land use regulations which guide and control development also have a potentially large influence on the type, amount, and severity of impacts which result. Thus, this scoping document uses a definition of urban development that captures both development actions and the policies and regulations that influence it.

For purposes of this GEIS, “urban development” is defined as:

the collection of forces, policies, and practices affecting the conversion of land use in and around urbanized areas¹ and the economic, social, and environmental conditions which result.

¹ Defined as incorporated areas with more than 15,000 in population and areas with population densities of 200 people per square mile in proximity to these cities (city and density criteria are taken from Laws of Minnesota, 1999, Section 108 which established the Urban Development GEIS)

Key Decision Criteria and Assumptions Used to Determine the Appropriate Scope and Content of the Urban Development GEIS

The following criteria and accompanying rationale were used to prioritize topics and select questions for inclusion in the GEIS.

1. The GEIS Should Concentrate on Impacts and Topics of Significant Interest to Minnesota Citizens

To be responsive to the interests of the funders of this study – the taxpayers of Minnesota – this GEIS scoping document assumes priority should be given to those topics and issues that have been documented in public opinion surveys as urban development issues of major concern.

2. The GEIS Should Concentrate on Impacts and Topics that are Researchable and Quantifiable

A recent, high-profile national literature summary on sprawl concluded there is a lack of empirical, quantitative study on urban development. This summary also concluded that the ability to measure and quantify many urban development impacts and isolate the relative influence of individual policies on urban development form is an extraordinarily difficult goal to accomplish. GEIS resources could be misapplied by investigating exceedingly complex, perhaps unanswerable, issues. Therefore, this scoping document assumes that priority should be given to topics and issues providing reasonable certainty that an empirical investigation can be conducted yielding objective, high quality information and analysis.

3. The GEIS Should Concentrate on Impacts that are Cumulative in Nature and Have Regional or Statewide Significance

Many urban development impacts are local in nature and addressed by site-specific forms of environmental review (such as environmental assessment worksheets, environmental impact statements, or alternative urban area review). The GEIS is specifically designed to investigate cumulative impacts that are of regional or statewide significance. Therefore, this scoping document assumes that priority should be given to impacts demonstrating these characteristics or qualities.

4. The GEIS Should Concentrate on Impacts That are Caused by Urban Development and Can Be Influenced by Changes in Policies and Practices

Although related to urban development, some impacts are primarily the result of broad economic, social, demographic, and market forces largely beyond individual or government control. Examples would include the changing structure of agriculture and regional transfers of population growth and wealth. While these complex relationships may merit closer investigation, this scoping document assumes that the best use of GEIS resources would be to concentrate attention on those impacts that are most directly caused by and influenced by urban development policy and practice.

5. The GEIS Should Concentrate on Gathering Information That Can Be Used to Guide Future Decisions on Development Practices and Policies

Research on urban development topics and relationships can yield an abundance of new data, information and understanding. Some information would be of more value to decision-makers than other information. This scoping document assumes that priority should be given to research topics in which the information generated can be used by decision-makers and has clear and significant policy implications.

The scoping document also is based on the recognition that there are legal and cultural foundations on which development in the United States historically has been based that are not likely to change. In addition, this scoping document assumes that urban growth and development is a certainty when viewed from a state perspective. Although localities can limit or prevent new development, households will continue to form, new housing will be created, and new employment centers will arise in the state. By acknowledging these constitutional, demographic and market realities, the GEIS can be a pragmatic investigation of topics of concern to Minnesota citizens rather than a body of theoretical studies.

The committee reviewed many urban development topics during the course of the scoping process. Personal judgments often differed with regards to how specific issues met, or failed to meet, the scoping criteria. The content of this scoping document represents consensus findings in which agreement was achieved. Appendix B identifies and discusses other noteworthy topics that received substantial support in the committee for inclusion in the GEIS but failed to achieve a consensus vote.

Study Framework and Topics of Concern

The proposed framework for the Urban Development GEIS is divided into two major areas of study. Each study area contains topics of concern and accompanying questions. Questions listed under each topic more clearly define the significant aspects of each issue and, if addressed, will provide an understanding as to the impact urban development policies and practices have on the issue.

It is recognized that an abundance of local and national research already exists on many of these topics. Inclusion in this GEIS scoping document does not necessarily imply new studies are required. In many circumstances, the principal value of the GEIS may be to collect existing information and synthesize the findings into a unified understanding of urban development in Minnesota.

GEIS Study Area #1 Characterizing Urban Development in Minnesota

The purpose of this study area is to document the nature and dynamics of urban development in Minnesota and understand why urban development occurs the way it does. The outcome of this study area will be a better understanding of what future urban development may be in light of the demographic trends, market forces, regulatory and fiscal policies, and governance issues currently shaping it.

This study area is comprised of three topics of concern and accompanying scoping questions.

A. Current Status of Urban Development Activity and Patterns in Minnesota

1. What are the trends in new residential housing in Minnesota with respect to the following development features?
 - a. Sewered vs. non-sewered residences
 - b. Multi-unit dwellings vs. single family dwellings
 - c. Lot sizes
 - d. Ownership forms
2. What are the trends concerning the amount and rates of conversion of the following types of land for urban development?
 - a. Land used for agriculture
 - b. Land used for forestry
 - c. Undisturbed lands / wildlands
3. What are the trends concerning the amounts and rates of property redevelopment of urban lots and parcels?

B. Trends Shaping Future Urban Development in Minnesota

1. What are the primary factors influencing consumer decisions on housing location and type?
2. By combining current market trends regarding development types and features with projected demographic trends regarding population, income, and household growth, what are the projections for future urban land consumption and development patterns (presuming no change in policies and practices)?

3. How does the supply of land available for development (meaning vacant and properly zoned) in Minnesota urban areas compare to the demand for land in these areas?

C. Influence of Various Policies on Land Conversion and Development Form

1. How and to what extent do the large number of local governments and the structure of local government finance in Minnesota influence urban development form?
2. How and to what extent do the following types of development policies influence land conversion and development patterns?
 - a. Transportation infrastructure planning, financing, and development
 - b. Tax-related subsidies and development incentives
 - c. Creation of urban service areas
3. To what extent do local zoning ordinances affect land supply for different types of development?

GEIS Study Area #2

Understanding Urban Development Impacts and Their Causes

The purpose of this study area is to gain an understanding of the root causes of urban development impacts. This study area will focus on quantifying and qualifying a number of different urban development impacts, explore the causes and consequences of the impacts, and investigate whether current attempts to mitigate impacts have unintended consequences creating new impacts or exacerbate existing ones.

This study area is comprised of six primary impacts of concern and accompanying scoping questions

A. Cost, Availability, and Geographic Distribution of Affordable Housing

Many Minnesotans are concerned with the affordability and availability of housing in growing urban areas and the public costs created by constrained housing options in areas of employment growth. How severe are these impacts? Can anything be done to improve the efficiency of housing markets in urban areas? Are housing affordability and availability problems inevitable and chronic issues for growing urban areas? If so, why? If not, what are the key leverage points where changes may offer opportunities for lasting improvement?

The following scoping questions were selected to gain a fundamental understanding of the issues and dynamics affecting housing issues and urban development in Minnesota.

1. How do trends in each of the following cost components of housing compare to Minnesota wage trends?

- a. Cost of raw land
 - b. Cost of finished lots
 - c. Cost of building labor and materials
 - d. Cost of development financing
2. To what extent do the following affect the affordability and availability of housing in growing urban areas?
- a. Land use controls limiting developable land supply
 - b. Zoning regulations limiting density (effective land supply) and type of property development permitted
 - c. Local and state development regulations affecting costs of finished lots
 - d. Local and state building codes affecting cost of construction
 - e. Property tax classification and structure creating economic incentives and disincentives in housing supply
 - f. Private covenants and ordinances setting minimum floor area
 - g. Delays in development approval process
3. To what extent does introducing lower value (subsidized or unsubsidized) housing or higher density housing in a neighborhood impact the property values of housing? How large is the zone of influence on property values created by these types of housing?
4. To what extent do the following state/ local relationships create incentives for local governments to increase minimum lot size, reduce densities, and exclude certain types of housing?
- a. the current division of responsibilities between state and local governments for funding urban-related services (including schools)
 - b. the design and structure of local government aid programs
5. Does a geographical mismatch between affordable housing and employment opportunities impose greater public costs in the following areas? If so, to what extent?
- a. transportation cost
 - b. workforce shortages
 - c. need for housing subsidies
 - d. drag on welfare caseload reduction

B. Distribution of Growth Costs and Benefits Among Citizens

The question of whether the beneficiaries of growth pay for the cost of growth is increasingly being debated in communities around the state. Likewise, there is growing concern that local land use and development controls can effectively “export” undesirable development impacts and their associated costs onto other communities or the region as a whole. How well does current development match costs incurred with benefits received? Is there a need for greater

regional accountability in local land use planning and zoning? Can the potential tension between the fiscal interests of a community and the broader welfare of a region be reconciled?

The following scoping questions were selected to gain a fundamental understanding of economic fairness, equity, and accountability issues in Minnesota urban development.

1. In development scenarios representing a range of communities in Minnesota, how are the following costs paid?
 - a. Local and/or regional sewerage systems
 - b. Collector roads and higher level streets
 - c. Local and regional water systems
 - d. Community amenities (parks, open spaces)
 - e. Schools
2. To what extent does new residential and commercial development in Minnesota “pay for itself?”
 - a. Does new development pay for the incremental capital cost of extending infrastructure services?
 - b. Does new development pay for the incremental operating costs of infrastructure services?
 - c. Does new development “overpay” by being taxed for debt service on past development, or by paying for new amenities enjoyed by the community as a whole?
 - d. To what extent does the structure of the Minnesota property tax system influence the ability of new residential development to pay for itself? How is this ability affected by the price and the density of development?
 - e. Where deficits occur, who makes up the difference?
3. Does new population growth from development increase per capita spending levels in a community? If so, are the tax revenues from new residents sufficient to cover the higher per capita spending levels associated with that growth? To what extent does this change over time?
4. What is the impact of restrictive zoning ordinances on relative rates of property value appreciation?
5. Which costs of growth can be reduced for a community through restrictive zoning ordinances for housing? To what extent can they be reduced?
6. To what extent do state aid systems adequately compensate neighboring cities and areas that are accommodating larger populations and/or higher densities for the greater amounts of public spending needed to cover these higher costs?

C. Cost of Urban Infrastructure

Related to the issue of who pays for growth, the actual cost of roads, sewers and other urban infrastructure and its relationship to land use is also under greater scrutiny. Is there a relationship between patterns of development and costs of infrastructure? Are there long term fiscal impacts for communities and for the state with regards to “how” we develop?

The following scoping questions were selected to gain a fundamental understanding of the economic impacts of development patterns and related infrastructure investments.

1. How do the following infrastructure development and maintenance costs vary with development patterns and densities?
 - a. roads and highways
 - b. sewers
 - c. solid waste management system
 - d. open space, parks and purchase of development rights
 - e. stormwater and waste water
2. How large is the existing maintenance deficit for urban infrastructure in Minnesota and how will this deficit change in the future given current infrastructure development patterns and trends?
3. What are current trends in the marginal (incremental) cost of road capacity expansion? How does the marginal cost compare to the average cost of new construction?
4. To what extent do state aids or state managed funding systems for infrastructure distort the true cost of urban development or enable less economically efficient forms of development?
5. How do the direct and indirect costs of on-site sewage treatment vs. sewer development compare? What are the trends and costs of retrofitting on-site septic to urban services and to what extent are retrofitting costs influenced by land use planning and controls?
6. To what extent are potential savings in infrastructure-related costs resulting from greater land use density offset by higher urban development costs associated with higher densities?

D. Urban Mobility

Urban mobility covers a number of urban development concerns such as congestion and commuting times, economic health and growth, urban air quality (including such issues as carbon monoxide, air toxins, carbon dioxide, particulate matter), and general quality of life issues for citizens. What are the critical cause and effect relationships between transportation form and these areas of concern? How significant are the current impacts? To what extent are land use and development forms potential avenues for improvement in these areas?

The following scoping questions were selected to gain a fundamental understanding of the relationship between urban development and urban mobility issues and impacts.

1. How do current trends in urban commuting times compare to historical trends?
2. What is the relationship between urban mobility and air quality? How and to what degree do each of the following contribute to urban air quality issues?
 - a. Vehicle miles traveled
 - b. Length and frequency of vehicle trips
 - c. Type and maintenance of vehicle
3. What kind of change in travel modes or new road capacity is needed to maintain or improve current air quality and congestion levels (assuming no advances in technology)
3. To what extent do different urban development forms materially alter driving behavior and vehicle miles traveled?
4. To what extent are road capacity issues adversely affected by deficiencies in transportation pricing?
5. To what extent would increased transit capacity affect the following transportation-related impacts?
 - a. Urban congestion
 - b. Economic development
 - c. Enabling welfare to work

E. Groundwater and Surface Water Quality and Availability

Historically, the quality of state water resources and access to them played an influential role in settlement. Today, the amenities, economic benefits and quality of life they provide continue to attract development interest and attention. Ensuring their continued health in light of development pressures is an issue of interest to all Minnesotans. How influential is urban development on state water quality? What aspects or dimensions of urban development demonstrate the greatest potential threats?

The following scoping questions were selected to gain a fundamental understanding of the relationship between urban development and water quality and availability issues.

1. What are the trends in river water quality which emanate from Minnesota urban areas? Is river water quality improving, declining, or remaining constant?
2. What are lake water quality trends in Minnesota urban areas? Is lake water quality improving, declining, or remaining constant?

3. To what extent are declines in surface water quality a function of urban development activity as opposed to other activities (such as agriculture)? What types of biological or chemical degradation are most prevalent in urban surface waters? To what specific aspects of urban development can this degradation be linked?
4. To what extent is urban development in Minnesota occurring in areas of potentially high susceptibility for groundwater contamination?
5. What is the influence of urban development on groundwater recharge and depletion rates? Given the interrelationship between groundwater recharge and surface waters, to what extent does urban development affect hydrological systems in the state?
6. How does the influence of urban development compare with other activities with respect to declines in groundwater quality and availability?

F. Ecosystem Integrity

Minnesota's natural ecosystems offer a rich diversity of plant and animal species as well as a number of critical services necessary for human health and welfare. To what extent does current development affect the function and biological integrity of Minnesota ecosystems? Can development be pursued in a way that contributes to ecosystem function and health rather than detracts from it?

The following scoping questions were selected to gain a fundamental understanding of the relationship between urban development and ecosystem integrity.

1. What are the impacts of urban development on native plant communities and associated fish and wildlife? How many and which threatened or endangered species in the state are categorized as such specifically due to urban development pressures? How does the severity of these impacts compare with those arising out of other land uses?
2. To what specific urban development-related activities can these negative impacts be linked (for example hydrological changes from development, introduction of non-native species, etc.)?
3. How much land having distinctive biological or ecological qualities is subject to land conversion and development activity?
4. How and to what extent does urban development influence the following ecosystem services?
 - a. Soil stabilization and waste assimilation
 - b. Climate modification / climate stabilization
 - c. Natural water treatment and storage by lakes, rivers, and wetlands

5. What is the economic value of ecosystems disrupted by development? How much does the state spend to replicate these services in areas where they have been materially altered?
6. To what extent can different development densities and forms have a material influence on the provision of these services?

Urban Development Alternatives to be Evaluated in the GEIS

Minnesota’s Environmental Review program also requires the scoping document to identify alternatives that will be addressed in the GEIS. During the scoping phase, the committee was charged with defining and characterizing “urban development alternatives.”

Although it might be possible to characterize urban development alternatives based on different urban development forms, the committee believed such an approach would have minimal practical value. Urban development and development impacts are heterogeneous – the nature of development and resulting impacts will vary from place to place depending on demographic changes, economic conditions, environmental features, and many other issues unique to a particular area. This reality makes comparison evaluations of alternative urban forms extraordinarily difficult. Equally important, nearly every aspect of development is managed to some extent by government -- when development occurs, where development occurs, what kind of development occurs and how dense the development is. Therefore, even if forms of development could be somehow be comparatively evaluated, market and political realities suggest that development will always take on many different styles and forms regardless of the findings of such an evaluation.

An alternative approach is based on the recognition that debates regarding urban development are nearly always focused on the means to achieve a goal rather than the goal itself. Most Minnesotans would agree that growth should be economically efficient, have minimal environmental impact, and improve the quality of life for all citizens. However, differences of opinion on the strategies and approaches needed to achieve these goals makes urban development a contentious topic. These differences can become the basis for defining urban development alternatives.

Using this approach, the Urban Development GEIS steering committee identified six consensus outcomes for urban development (p 15). These are general statements about future urban development that all members could agree with and support. Key ideas pertaining to each outcome are also noted.

Eventually, the alternatives evaluated within this GEIS will be different programs, policies, and /or approaches to achieve these urban development outcomes. Specific alternatives will be developed after GEIS research has identified the core issues that prevent each outcome from being realized to a greater degree in current urban development. Two or more alternative approaches for each outcome will be evaluated in the GEIS.

Alternatives will be evaluated for their economic and technical feasibility and for the development trade-offs and consequences likely to occur from their implementation. It is anticipated that the alternatives eventually investigated in this study would reflect the full diversity of political and economic opinion in the state regarding growth and growth management. This will allow the strengths and weaknesses of both market-oriented and government-oriented approaches to be investigated and better understood.

Based on this alternatives evaluation, the GEIS will eventually generate a series of recommendations on improvements in urban development policy and practice to increase the benefits and reduce the detriments of future urban growth in the state.

Desirable Urban Development Outcome

Key ideas

<p>Future urban development features improved housing opportunities for all urban area residents</p>	<p>Improved affordability, greater choice, and more locational options</p>
<p>Future urban development features fair distribution of growth costs and benefits among citizens</p>	<p>Benefits realized are proportional to costs incurred Greater accountability for costs and impacts imposed onto other communities or region because of local land use and development regulations</p>
<p>Future urban development features the preservation and enhancement of ecosystem functions in urban areas and the preservation and restoration of native ecosystems</p>	<p>Type and amount of development is compatible with the environmental conditions and capabilities of the area Critical habitat and unique biological qualities are preserved or enhanced in urban development</p>
<p>Future urban development features energy efficient communities with ready access to jobs, goods, and services.</p>	<p>Better urban mobility, reduced congestion</p>
<p>Future urban development maintains and/or improves the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater</p>	<p>Water quality not adversely affected by development Water quality enhanced or improved through land conversion / development process</p>
<p>Future urban development features vital and strong central cities</p>	<p>Core cities are economically competitive and attractive places to live and work</p>

Future Development Actions and GEIS Timetable

Public review of the Draft Scoping Document will commence following EQB approval of the draft scoping document. A series of public meetings will be convened to allow the public to comment on the adequacy of the document. Written comments will also be solicited from concerned citizens and other stakeholder organizations including state agencies.

To assist in this refinement of the GEIS and further sharpen the focus, an expert panel comprised of organizational and academic researchers in these fields will be convened to review the draft scoping document and recommend areas where further information and analysis would be most useful.

EQB staff, working with the Steering Committee, will review this input and work with experts to develop a rough budget estimate. Upon the completion of these activities, the Steering committee will forward its recommendations to the EQB and submit the final scoping document for approval.

To date, only the scoping phase of this GEIS has received funding by the Legislature. No funds have yet been approved for the study itself. The scoping document and accompanying budget will be introduced into the 2001 legislative session. Should funding be approved for the actual study, work would commence on July 1, 2001 at the beginning of the next biennium.

APPENDIX A

List of Agencies, Organizations, and Independent Experts Presenting Oral or Written Scoping Recommendations to the Urban GEIS Steering Committee January – June, 2000

State Agencies (recommendations were not identified as official agency positions)

Department of Agriculture	Department of Transportation
Department of Health	Housing Finance Agency
Department of Human Services	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Department of Natural Resources	Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance
Department of Trade and Economic Development	Department of Commerce / Public Service

Stakeholder Organizations

Alliance for Metropolitan Stability	Minnesotans for an Energy Efficient Economy
Builders Association of the Twin Cities	Minnesota Transportation Alliance
Citizens League	Minnesota Trust for Public Land
Institute for Local Self Reliance	Transit for Livable Communities
National Association of Industrial and Office Properties	American Farmland Trust
Minnesota Farm Bureau	Minnesota Farmers Union
Minnesota Fish and Wildlife Legislative Alliance	Preservation Alliance of Minnesota
Sierra Club	

Local / Regional Government

Metropolitan Council
Association of Metropolitan Municipalities
Association of Minnesota Counties
Minnesota Association of Townships

Academic/Other Experts

Dr. John Adams	University of Minnesota
John Herman	Faegre & Benson (recommended by Minnesota Chamber of Commerce)
Dr. Hal Lofgreen	Minnesota Economic Development Center
Dr. Gerald McCollough	Center for Transportation Studies
Dr. Steven Taff	University of Minnesota
Wendell Cox	Wendell Cox and Associates

Also received were comments from 16 applicants to UD GEIS Steering Committee who were not chosen to serve as members and from 58 citizens responding to surveys.

APPENDIX B

Conclusions of Committee Regarding Other Key Urban Development Topics

In the scoping process, a number of urban development topics and issues were excluded from the document or received less attention based on the scoping criteria and rationale described in this report.

Following is a summary of the discussion on three particularly noteworthy urban development issues whose lack of profile in the scoping document may appear unusual.

Agricultural Impacts

This topic was seen as having three dimensions: farmland loss, the impact on farming as an economic activity, and the social impacts on farmers and rural communities. The committee believed that additional documentation of farmland conversion would be useful and included this question in Study Area #1- Characterizing Urban Development in Minnesota. However, the committee concluded that the impact of farmland loss on crop production was not a significant impact given production technologies in farming today. It was recognized that an alternative conclusion could be reached by considering a longer timeframe since the demand for food production in the face of population pressures may change. However, the committee concluded the study should be responsive first to circumstances and issues of concern today and the foreseeable future. Therefore the farmland loss issue was not recommended as part of the study.

More controversial were the potential economic and social impacts of urban development on farming and farming communities. Proponents argued that the ongoing economic viability of farming operations and impositions on the right and freedom to farm are impacts of significant concern. Others argued that financial compensation to farmers for land mitigates much of the economic impact and that concerns about urban development are often based not on whether development occurs, but the timing of the development (i.e. pressures for land conversion are experienced sooner than farmland owners would like it to occur).

Similarly, proponents also argued that social impacts such as the quality of life changes and changes in the character and make-up of rural communities deserved further analysis. Others noted that the legislative language authorizing the GEIS directed attention toward urban areas and areas with urban-type densities rather than impacts on rural farm communities.

Eight members voted for inclusion, six against inclusion, with two members absent, a majority but not a consensus vote as defined by committee ground rules¹.

Concentration of Poverty / Integration of Neighborhoods and Schools

The Committee agreed that concentration of poverty is an impact of concern but differed on how and to what extent this issue should be accommodated.

¹ Under the committee groundrules, “consensus” was achieved if 2/3 or more of the members approved the topic and no one vetoed its inclusion.

Several members believed the issue deserved to be classified as a separate impact of concern. These members argued that better distribution and access to urban resources (which would include parks and other neighborhood amenities as well as schools) and the opportunities created by them is essential to creating a just society and a stable, well-functioning urban area. Moreover, there was concern that addressing it “indirectly” through other impacts of concern would fail to give this very high-profile topic the recognition it deserved. Other members argued that concentration of poverty is a complex phenomenon more the result of largely uncontrollable market and social forces rather than “caused” by urban development and settlement patterns.

The committee concluded that the housing issues in concentration of poverty – specifically, the inability of individuals to locate in less impoverished areas and take advantage of greater quality and level of neighborhood resources -- was the area of strongest connection to urban development policies and practices. Thus, the committee chose to incorporate this concern into the housing topic and included the geographic distribution of affordable housing as an impact of concern.

A related debate arose in determining whether “integration of neighborhoods and schools” should be included as a “desirable urban development outcome” for which alternative approaches would be evaluated. Proponents argued that this is the alternative to concentrated poverty and therefore a logical and desirable urban development outcome. Economic and racial integration was seen as beneficial in terms of both opportunity and social justice. Others argued that this is a means to an outcome rather than an outcome itself – the goal is improved access to higher quality urban resources and opportunities and there may be any number of ways to do this.

Six members voted for inclusion as an outcome, six voted against inclusion, and two members abstained (with two members absent). This failed to achieve consensus as defined by committee ground rules.

Technology Trends and Influence on Urban Development

This topic was recognized for its potentially profound influence on urban development patterns and impacts, but presented challenges on how to address it.

Through the course of the scoping process committee members identified several technological trends having direct and indirect influences on the type and severity of urban development impacts experienced in the future. These included:

- Advances in automobile engines / emerging fuel cell technologies influencing air quality issues
- Ultra-clean fuels influencing air quality issues
- Telecommunication advances increasing the convenience and viability of home offices with corresponding land use and congestion implications
- Distributed electricity generation / micropower allowing highly dispersed “off-grid” development

While recognizing the large implications these developments may have for future urban development, the Committee was not comfortable in recommending studies that attempted to predict their influence and impacts. Such “futurist” studies, it was noted, have been done in the past and are inevitably inaccurate. The committee believed that the GEIS research should be undertaken with an awareness and recognition that these forces can and will develop over time, but concluded that study resources would best be applied elsewhere.