

## How Should Your Community Grow?

Indiana is growing—the 2000 census leaves no doubt about that. We are a growing state. If growth is inevitable, is sprawl also inevitable? Does it really make any difference how and where growth takes place in our communities or in our state as a whole?

There are three main ways to grow and/or places for growth, and each has certain characteristics. As you read about them, ask yourself if your community is growing as you think it should.

### Infill Development

There are two basic meanings to the term “infill development.” One is exactly what the name implies, filling in gaps, such as vacant lots in urban areas. The second is similar, the replacement or rehabilitation of undesirable structures in urban areas.

No, infill development doesn't mean to fill all the urban parks with houses! It means to use built-up areas and take advantage of all the infrastructure and services readily available at these locations, things like streets, sidewalks, public water, sewer service, police and fire protection, garbage service, and cable TV. It means that new residents join an existing community with its own style and characteristics. This applies to vacant lots in small towns as well as in big cities.



This open space can accommodate additional housing, so it's a prime candidate for infill development.

### Adjacent Development

Other terms you may have heard are “suburban expansion” or “edge expansion.” These terms mean growing next to the built-up areas of cities or towns. Many cities have grown this way over the years as they expand and annex new areas.



This new development (new houses, new trees) is taking place across a street that had been the edge of the town (older homes, large trees).

Adjacent development takes advantage of nearby services. Streets, water lines, sewer lines, and many other services and types of infrastructure can simply be extended to the new area. New residents are influenced by the characteristics of the existing neighborhood next door, but the new area may also establish an identity of its own in the future.

### Rural Housing Development

This is planting houses outside of the urban or suburban environment, often in agricultural areas. There are two main types of this “exurban development.”

One is individual, scattered development of houses, often along county roads. Lots are often large to accommodate private septic systems because there are no sewer services in most rural areas, and, in some cases, because zoning rules require large lots in an attempt to discourage housing development in certain areas.



The second type of rural housing development is a grouping of houses together in what are usually called “clusters.” Cluster developments are similar to many subdivisions except that they are located in rural areas some distance from urban service centers.



These houses are clustered in an agricultural area.

People choosing either type of rural development are often seeking to escape from the city and its attendant pressures and problems. But some new rural residents are ill prepared for life in the country.

- Instead of a water meter, they may have a private well.
- Instead of a sewer line, they may have a septic tank and field.
- The county road may be gravel, and the snowplow may not be in any hurry to get there.
- Electrical power may be less dependable and take longer to restore when interrupted.
- Cable TV and garbage service may not be available.

If these services have to be provided by local government, the costs are much higher than they are in more densely populated areas, where there are more people to share the costs.

## Are Clusters Better?

Some people see cluster development as a much better way to develop the rural areas than having houses scattered around. What are some of the advantages of clusters?

One is reduced loss of farmland. Ordinances may require a minimum acreage for housing in rural zones, but averaging the acreage and grouping the houses all in one corner can allow the remaining acreage to be farmed. Housing clusters could be placed on the least productive soils, saving the best soils for agriculture.

Having fewer common borders between farms and housing areas may reduce conflicts.

Having one school bus stop instead of many may benefit traffic flow.

If services are to be provided, it may be cheaper to run one sewer line to a group of 20 houses rather than having to connect 20 scattered houses.

Finally, residents may feel more of a sense of community living in cluster developments instead of in more isolated settings.

