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Land Use & Housing Committee

Item #09-9-5
Information

August 27, 2009

Rural-Urban Connections Strategy: Technical Update

Issue: The technical work on the RUCS project has evolved to include the capacity to model changes in the agriculture economy.

Recommendation: None; this is information only.

Discussion: Over the past several months, the RUCS team has prepared the data needed to expand the I-PLACE^{3}S modeling capacity to include analysis of land use and economic changes in rural areas. Crop data were assembled from various sources to provide a better "picture" of the types of land use or economic activity occurring in agricultural areas throughout the region. Currently, general plans show these areas simply as "agriculture" or "open space." A landscape typology was developed to summarize over 120 crops into 24 "types" of agricultural activity and to assign economic and other descriptive data to those types. Those efforts provide the underpinning of the analysis capacity that will be presented to the committee.

A beta version of the I-PLACE^{3}S model for rural areas is under development; however, preliminary results can be generated to demonstrate its functionality. The model is capable of providing indicators such as crop yield, value and return, water demand, labor needs, and truck trips. More detailed indicators can be generated as needed, including estimated costs for establishing vine and tree crops, fixed versus variable costs, and other types of revenue (e.g., payments for ecosystem services). Costs and revenues can be adjusted to test sensitivity to various market conditions. The model will be folded in with the existing I-PLACE^{3}S model providing a means to analyze simultaneously both rural and urban changes under various future scenarios.

Approved by:

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