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Coastal Zone
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PRELIMINARY REPORT RECOMMENDING THE

ORGANIZATION OF A

LAND INFORMATION INSTITUTE

COASTAL ZONE
INFORMATION CENTER

by

THE ORONO COMMITTEE

February 1, 1977

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I. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

An understanding of the human relationship to and dependence upon the land is fundamental to the decision making processes in the political, legal, economic, social and environmental fields affecting the quality of human existence.

The pursuit of new knowledge regarding this relationship and the education of the public, as well as those responsible to the public, is the most effective way to bring about the institutional changes necessary to improve these decision-making processes.

The Land Information Institute is an organization of individuals with a wide variety of professional and academic skills who are dedicated to developing and promoting integrated systems for gathering, qualifying, storing and retrieving non-confidential data concerning the land and its resources, along with non-destructive data-information conversion systems, to enhance the ability of people to use planet Earth in a manner to insure the survival of the environment and the quality of human existence.

II. STATEMENT OF NEED

Improvements in methods and systems of recording land data will require re-direction of individual record-keeping operations of a vast number of separate state and local governmental agencies. These are among the most tradition-bound of our institutions of government, partly for the commendable objective of continuity of records.

Leadership in bringing new priorities to these record-keeping institutions must be developed within their local constituencies. The improvements will depend upon individuals acting through the appropriate processes of governmental change in each state and region, drawing upon the best standards and procedures that can be applied there.

The leaders in this effort will need the support of a resource center having national scope, to provide a combination of research findings, model methods and systems, referrals to localities where these have been tested by experience (both in the U.S. and abroad) and promotion of common interests at the national level.

The promoter of improved land records systems does not now have available an organization from which to draw adequate support for his efforts. A number of national associations represent the interests of individual professions

that must play a role, and some of these are developing guidelines and model systems for land information to serve their individual purposes, notably the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, the Council of State Governments (in a study of computer assisted assessment), and the American Public Works Association. However, none of these is dedicated to the development of multi-purpose systems that pool the land records resources of all functions of government, to the mutual benefit.

There exists a consortium of representatives of many of these associations in the U.S., Canada and Mexico: the North American Institute for Modernization of Land Data Systems, known as "MOLDS". It has provided a valuable forum for presentations of various points of view, and hopefully will continue to do so. However, MOLDS is not structured in a way to engage the energies of concerned individuals who operate outside of one of its member associations. Further, the responses of MOLDS even to the initiatives of those who inside one of these establishments are constrained by the limits of concerns among the member agencies and associations.

A great deal of light has been shed on the subject of land information at the conferences and workshops of the Urban and Regional Information Systems Associations, "URISA". The annual meetings sponsered by URISA bring together individuals

from many disciplines, and have proven very valuable in keeping all of us up-to-date with new developments in this rapidly changing field. However, URISA depends upon the contributions of time of its members to pursue its purposes, which at present limits its impact to the exchange of information through the annual meetings. Further, the present leadership of URISA has paid little attention to the requirements of building the land data base on records of individual land ownership parcels.

Recognizing the current lack of a national organization of appropriate scope and energies, the Orono Committee recommends the organization of a Land Information Institute in the manner described in the following pages. Once organized, it is hoped that the new Institute will forge alliances with URISA, MOLDS, and possibly other national organizations whose resources and programs will compliment its efforts.

III. PROPOSED OBJECTIVES OF THE LAND INFORMATION INSTITUTE

A. Research

1. To identify problems relating to land information needs that require research, for example:

   a. Identification of the types and general characteristics of land information systems currently operating in the counties of the United States, and the regional patterns of existing systems to which improvement programs must respond.

   b. Descriptions of the general components of effective integrated systems for gathering, qualifying, storing and retrieving data concerning the land, and non-destructive data-information conversion systems, in a format that permits the installation of one or more selected components as appropriate in the improvement programs of each state.

   c. Systems designs and/or development of computer software for individual components described above, where requested by an operating agency or agencies as the client.

   d. The economics of programs to improve land information systems, including costs, general benefits, and prospective cost savings involved in the installation of components as described above.

2. To identify sources of funding to support research and possibly act as a contracting agent or liaison between potential funding parties and researchers.

3. To supply task forces to work on specific problem oriented research projects. In general, the development of background and guidelines for pursuit of the additional objectives of the Institute listed under Education, Information, and Promotion of New Institutions and Commitments, as listed below.

B. Education

1. To foster programs that prepare the individuals who must provide technical and policy leadership in organizing modern land information systems.

2. To foster viable curricula in land information systems at the university level.

3. To prepare evaluations of various land records systems for public consumption.

4. To promote professional and public efforts at understanding and accepting the concepts of land information systems as potential users and beneficiaries.

C. Information

1. To maintain a clearing house that actively circulates references to current projects, publications, etc., that provide information on the philosophy, current status, proposed projects and legal requirements of modern land information systems.

2. To publish a periodical professional journal.

3. To establish the identity of the Land Information Institute with the public and with officials who should be using its services, and to generate requests for assistance.

4. To provide referrals to qualified experts, informally, upon request.

5. To provide an institutional arrangement and contact to maintain technical and multidisciplinary communications between the organizers, collectors and users of land and resource information.

D. Promotion of New Institutions and Commitments

1. To urge that an agency of the Federal government and of each of the states and territories be designated to develop guidelines and standards for any and all systems of land-based information that are compiled or maintained using public funds, and to review all contracts and internal agency procedures for such work.

2. To develop model legislation for distribution to organizations that can further it, including MOLDS, ACSM, ABA, etc.

3. To foster the transfer among state and local agencies of the appropriate components of land information systems and technologies that have proved to provide effective services and a sound basis for building multi-purpose records systems.

4. To develop a reputation for a high level of professional and academic standards for any and all of the publications and recommendations of the Institute, which can then become the basis of a future influential role in shaping new public programs.

5. To avoid direct lobbying for legislation, which would appear to be serving short-term objectives and might jeapordize a tax exempt status.

6. To work with other interested organizations and institutions toward interdisciplinary acceptance and promotion of these objectives among representative systems suppliers, administrators and users.

IV. PROSPECTIVE FUNDING

A. Internal, from the membership

1. Membership dues should be set at a minimum of $100 per year at the outset, with provisions for increases to acommodate inflation of the costs of business.

2. A schedule of higher levels of contributions should be established for contributing agencies, sustaining members, etc.

B. Grants from Public Interest Sponsers

1. World Bank?

2. German Marshall Fund?

C. Grants or Contracts for research projects

1. Information system designs for registries of deeds?

2. Feasibility studies or project designs for the HUD demonstration program under RESPA?

D. Publications Budget

1. Subscriptions, and sale of publications.

2. Grants for specific research projects (see under Objective A.)

3. Possibly, a grant for publication of a journal (E.g., RALI has asked for a possible publisher of a new journal on geographic information systems.)

E. Fees, from users of the talent pool.

V. ORGANIZATION

A. General Approach

The Land Information Institute should take advantage of the methods of organization and decision-making developed by private business corporations. Advice should be sought from a management expert for our final report.

B. Policy Direction

1. The Board of Directors of the Land Information Institute should have about 15 members, who eventually will be elected annually for one-year terms. However, to insure some continuity for at least the first 5 years, the 15 people elected at the organizational meeting should have terms of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 years, respectively (3 each). Re-election thereafter would be for only one year terms, without limit on how many times one person may be re-elected.

2. Membership in the Board of Directors should be based upon individual merits, not upon representation of some organization or interest group.

3. The membership of the Board of Directors should be required to include at least one skilled practicioner in each of a list of disciplines required for a modern land information system, e.g.: real estate law; surveying; systems design; and perhaps a few others.

4. For the first election at the organizational meeting, only, there should be a maximum number of members of the Board whose primary practice is in the same discipline (perhaps 4).

5. Nomination and election of directors should be by those members in good standing in attendance at the annual meeting, who should be allowed to collect and exercise the proxy votes of other members in good standing who are unable to attend.

6. The Chairman of the Board of Directors, to be elected by all members of the Land Information Institute, should have broad powers of appointment of committees, hiring of staff, convening of Board meetings, etc., with a minimum of detailed procedures worked out in advance of this organizational meeting. From the outset, however, certain types of decisions should be specified as requiring ratification by the full Board of Directors, or by the membership of the Institute.

C. Personnel

1. An "Administrative Secretary" should be recruited to start up the organization, for part-time pay. An office secretary will also be required from the start, full-time.

2. Once the organization is established and an adequate, continuing budget has been obtained, a full-time position of Executive Director should be created. The person who had served as the Administrative Secretary could become a candidate for this position, but a different range of skills probably would be necessary.

3. Project Director positions should be funded out of the separate budgets that would be established for individual research grant projects, publications, etc. They would play important roles in the direction of the Institute, but their financial support would be tied to the project budgets.

D. Location

1. An address in a major metropolitan center is desirable. However, the location should be distinct from any academic institution.

2. Excess space in a regional Federal office building may be obtainable at little or no charge.

VI. A SCENARIO FOR GETTING STARTED

A. Prospectus

The final report of The Orono Committee in the spring of 1977 should be a prospectus inviting membership in the Land Information Institute, setting forth the philosophy, rules of organization, preliminary statements of objectives, procedures for amending rules and objectives, etc.

B. Enlistment of Charter Members

An acting secretary and treasurer should be named in the prospectus, to receive deposits of dues of those wishing to become members of the Land Information Institute. When a specified minimum number had been obtained (perhaps 50), he or she would then convene the organizational meeting, sending notices to all who had paid dues, along with proxy statements that could be executed by those unable to attend, to be exercised by any other specified member in good standing.

C. Organizational Meeting

A complete Board of Directors would be elected at the organizational meeting, but for terms of varying lengths, to set up the rotation of Board membership.

D. Constitution and By-Laws

The detailed structuring of the Land Information Institute should be worked out by committees organized by the Board of Directors after the Orgainzational meeting, not in advance.

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