

## Cost of Services

Municipal decisions involving development projects are generally related to the cost of providing services to the growth areas. Location, timing and intensity of new developments enter into such decisions. Service costs can be adversely impacted if, for example, severe limitations exist for extending services or development precedes such services. Counties on the other hand have very little direct responsibility for providing services, limited primarily to roads and law enforcement, so development decisions are based to a lesser extent on public service costs.

Although sprawl development patterns have surfaced in some parts of the county, the ability to provide services has not yet been severely impacted. However, the potential for costly public expenditures related to sprawl development is just now being realized in addressing transportation issues at both the county and township level. As new housing tracts move deeper into agricultural areas, increased traffic on gravel township roads is necessitating a higher level of maintenance and in some cases public demands are being voiced for costly reconstruction and surface improvements.

Law enforcement can be expected to experience an increase in calls for assistance as the rural population grows. This will require additional personnel if emergency response times are to be maintained. The inherent inefficiencies of serving a more disperse population are evident.

The economic costs of sprawl have for the most part been hidden, ignored or quietly borne by a larger segment of the general population. This population base may include the township, county, state or even federal jurisdiction, but almost always extends beyond those individuals who directly benefit from the expenditures. A case in point is the construction of a central wastewater collection and treatment facility necessitated by the concentration, overuse, and malfunction of septic systems. In the past, federal and state grants and low interest loan programs have assisted sanitary districts in financing a substantial part of the construction cost. Construction costs involved in serving sprawl developments will undoubtedly be greater than for urban areas.

If the county does not avoid further concentrations of development in unserved areas, the need for central collection and treatment facilities will increase, most probably without the assistance of outside funding sources. Federal and state funding assistance has been declining and could be reduced even further in the future. This could mean a shift in the financial burden from benefitted homeowners to county taxpayers as a whole. County involvement may not end with financing but actually extend into ownership and operation of the facilities depending on the magnitude of the problem and the capacity of those being served to operate an independent system.

Environmental problems have an urgency which oftentimes require emergency measures that cannot be ignored or delayed until adequate resources are available, unlike poor road conditions which may be inconvenient and frustrating to drivers but where improvements can be delayed without affecting public safety and welfare.