

Redevelopment district as land use policy tool

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Land use policy tool What is your tool? Land use policy tools are used for ensuring that there is an efficient planning for the “ scientific, aesthetic, and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities, and services with a view to securing the physical, economic, and social efficiency, health and well-being of urban and rural communities.” 1 The land use policy tool explored in this paper is the redevelopment district. What is it designed to do? (What problem(s) is it intended t solve?) State laws have used redevelopment district tools in order to “ clean up blighted parts of the community.” 2 In most areas (cities or villages), there are certain sections that had once been established residential, commercial or industrial zones, that have now become old or abandoned, and are in need of repair. The ‘ redevelopment district’ programs target these rundown areas for development, mainly by focussing on improving the public facilities like the “ roads, utility upgrades, or public spaces.” 3 How is it designed to work? Redevelopment district policies are land use policy tools used by the different state governments to redevelop certain old areas within a city or a town. One the work of redevelopment is done it generally results in the creation of a new residential or commercial area, with new homes and also new jobs. A Redevelopment District Board functions with eight (8) members, of which Mayor of the County recommends one member; the city mayor appoints another member; Housing authority appoints one; while there is one member from the public housing representative board, and another one from the Downtown District Partnership. The County Regional Planning Commission appoints one member, while a member from the Austin Peay State University is compulsory (designated by the President of US); 2 members are from the citizen groups appointed by the mayor and city council, who have a <https://assignbuster.com/redevelopment-district-as-land-use-policy-tool/>

background on the subject of development and finances. This Board then review all redevelopment projects and approves them, if they are found to be in line with the Redevelopment District Plan guidelines, while fulfilling all coding and zoning requirements. They also approve “ developer agreements, approve Tax increment Finance loans, recommend to the Regional Planning Commission the rezoning of property, if necessary, recommend the adoption of additional land use regulations, if needed, and recommend acquisition of property by the Housing Authority, if necessary.” 4 When redevelopment agencies work towards renovating an old abandoned area, the property values automatically increase in the adjoining areas, resulting in a rise in revenues from the property taxes. With this increase, the redevelopment agencies can repay their loans, acquired while redeveloping. They can also use these funds to buy more old properties, and create a better infrastructure in that area. Is it regulatory-based or incentive-based?

Redevelopment districts are established with the aim of achieving certain local goals and are an economic incentive-based land policy tool. Here the local government can use the Tax Increment Financing, commonly called TIF, where a part of the increased taxes can be used on a property, once its construction is over. The incentive or the reward scale is to bring in more developers in order to assimilate the aspired re-developmental regulations and objectives for general public benefits. Problems and controversies of redevelopment district policies: The redevelopment district polices are facing many problems in the recent times. It has been observed that the “ Planners, who in the early years of redevelopment practice were leaders in defining the scope and practice of redevelopment, are often eclipsed today by special interest redevelopment organizations that may or may not have the

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broadest possible perspective.”⁵ Though the redevelopment planning has been seen in various public policy packages, it has not yet focussed on rural or urban redevelopments specifically. In the recent times it has also been noticed that local government have lost their authorities to sell old and abandoned properties to developers, after growing number of complaints that alleged that a handful of the favoured developers got the majority of the redevelopment work from the government. The original aim of redeveloping old decrepit areas has now been replaced by a ‘zero-sum game.’ Here, “communities compete for increasingly small shares of retail activity by pouring redevelopment resources into retail recruitment and attraction. Tax and land use laws in some states promote the zero-sum game to the detriment of effective planning, and many redevelopment agencies are reluctant to give up what little they have been able to acquire.”⁶ Besides, it has also been noticed that often citizens use the right of an individual property owner, to halt a legitimate redevelopment project from progressing. Thus, a look at the track record of redevelopment district policies shows that it had always been mired in controversies, and though the goals were always in the right place, the process used for achieving these goals have not been always appropriate and transparent. Example (cite case study) of when policy tool was successful: Cities such as Napa, Camarillo, Brea, Carlsbad, Irvine, and Thousand Oaks in California, are examples of successful redevelopment plans. As for example, in the “City of Brea... the redevelopment agency was able to create a more lively, safe downtown and Gas Lamp district with the inclusion of a new ballpark. The City of South Lake Tahoe was able to develop their Heavenly Village Project which not only brought quality businesses to their community but helped preserve adjacent

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environmentally sensitive areas, expand open space, and open up new view corridors.” 7 These are the examples of successful redevelopment projects within US. Though, mired in controversies and many changes in the policies associated with redevelopment planning, the tool itself has not wholly failed, in the context of US redevelopment processes, and is widely used all over the country, though plans are on to make the entire process more transparent and open to the public.

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