

Spotlight – County of Orange/Orange County Planning (from the June 2014 CSDC Network News)

The County of Orange established its association with the State Data Center (SDC) in the 1970s, becoming one of the first participants in the network. The County has continued to support SDC activities for almost 40 years, and is currently one of the 35 affiliate agencies within the SDC network. During those years, there have been numerous Orange County organizational changes, including the department responsible for supporting the SDC affiliate function. Current SDC activities are under the auspices of OC Planning in the Advance Planning and Sustainable Development Section, where they have been for the last 15 years. The County of Orange continues to support the SDC as a dedicated member and is proud to provide resources to enhance access to demographic resources.



Advance Planning and Sustainable Development Section



The Advance Planning and Sustainable Development section maintains and processes amendments to the County of Orange General Plan, the County of Orange Zoning Code and Specific Plans for the unincorporated area. This section also supports regional planning efforts and liaisons with the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the SDC Coordinating Agency for six Southern California counties. Staff from the Advance Planning section participates on the Technical Advisory Committees for both the Orange County Council of Governments (OCCOG) and the Center for Demographic Research (CDR) at Cal State Fullerton.

On behalf of the County, OC Planning acts as the Orange County SDC Affiliate for the California Department of Finance. Advance Planning staff provides general countywide demographic information such as population, housing and employment data to members of the public and other governmental agencies.

Additional responsibilities include legislative review and analysis, digital mapping (Geographic Information System) support, and participation in the development of regional planning documents such as the Orange County Sustainable Communities Strategy (OC SCS) and the SCAG Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS).

About the County of Orange/OC Planning Staff

Linda Smith, Research Analyst, handles SDC activities for the County of Orange. She has been involved with Census and SDC demographic support functions since she began working for Orange County in 1975, while in college. Linda has a degree in Geography from California State University, Fullerton and a certificate in Urban Planning from University of California, Irvine.

Having worked through four decennial censuses, Linda has experienced many technological advances as well as staffing changes at the County. In the years leading up to the 1980 and 1990 censuses, County staff provided input to many Census geographic programs that required hiring large numbers of temporary staff. Orange County was growing rapidly during these years, which meant many new streets and addresses had to be added to the files prior to each Census. In addition, non-electronic data resources such as paper address maps, paper

topographic maps, and hard copy air-photos or field surveys were used to provide updates for the Census Address Coding Guide and Geographic Base File/Dual Independent Map Encoding (GBF/DIME) file that is now the Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) file.

After the 1980 Census, processing of census data for smaller areas, such as census tracts, block-groups, and blocks, required a large number of County staff, including programmers and administrative support personnel. Programming and software programs that were used at the time included SAS and ARC/INFO. Hardware used for data processing was IBM PC's and a mainframe VAX.

Today, technology has advanced, with personal computers commonplace in the office and access to census data on the internet readily available. The Census Bureau and DOF now process data at the small geographic levels needed by data users. The number of the County's demographic support staff needed today is less than it was 20-40 years ago.



Linda is holding a group photo of County demographic support staff that provided Census and SDC support during the 1970's.

In preparation for the 2010 Census, Linda led countywide work efforts on Census geographic programs, including Participant Statistical Areas Program, Block Boundary Suggestion Program, Local Update of Census Addresses, New Construction, and others.

In her role as liaison to the SDC, Linda prepares the annual "Housing Unit Change Data Survey" for DOF, a monthly "Permits Issued New Housing Construction" survey for the Census Bureau, and also hosts Census workshops and computer training classes. She enjoys providing local Census data for Orange County.