

In the development of Chiang Rai Province both in urban and rural area, urban communities are needed to be centers for development in order to weld the roles and functions of urban and rural communities to be in line with the spatial development guideline.

This research aims to study about the hierarchy of urban centers and the development potential of Chiang Rai both in communities level and districts level as well as the relation of urban system. The result of the study revealed that the level of communities development is directly related to the spatial development potential, that is, the major urban centers of high development level are in the districts of high development potential and also the major urban centers of low development level are in the districts of low development potential. The communities of high development potential are, namely, Muang Chiang Rai Municipality; Mae Sai Sanitary District, Mae Chan Sanitary District and Muang Phan Sanitary District. These communities are located along the National Highway No.1. The communities of low development potential are similar to the rural communities which compose of few activities and are less complicated than in urban communities.

It was found that the economics variables are the significant variables to measure the development value in the urban level, namely, banks and markets. In the spatial level, the significant variables are economics and physical, namely, income tax, industrial cost and numbers of urban centers.

The guideline of Chiang Rai's urban centers development is to stipulate the roles of the urban communities in relation with physical, economics and local resources, in order to transfer the development from Muang Chiang Rai to rural areas. The results of the research found that Mae Sai Sanitary Districts is the frontier commercial center which are likely to be the highest growth urban center.