

## TALKING POINTS

### BENEFITS OF PLANNING AND QUALITY GROWTH

These are the things planning and quality growth can do for your community--**the points to make** when talking to your citizens about planning:

- ◆ **Comprehensive planning** is an important **management tool** for promoting a strong, healthy community.
- ◆ A comprehensive plan can be used to promote **orderly and rational development** so that the city or county remains physically attractive while preserving important natural or historic resources.
- ◆ Planning helps protect important **natural and historic resources**.
- ◆ Planning helps the community **invest its money wisely** in infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer, schools, parks and green space, and other facilities needed to sustain the high quality of life.
- ◆ **Quality of life** is maintained and improved.
- ◆ There is a **vision**, clearly stated and shared by all, that describes the future of the community.
- ◆ Private **property rights** are protected.
- ◆ **Economic development** is encouraged and supported.
- ◆ There is **more certainty** about :
  - Where development will occur,
  - What it will be like,
  - When it will happen, and
  - How the costs of development will be met.
  - Getting the development patterns the community desires, such as:
    - Traditional neighborhoods
    - Infill development
    - Sense of place
    - Transportation alternatives
    - Mixed Uses

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- ◆ There is **more certainty** about : (continued)
  - Achieving the **social and economic development** that citizens want, such as:
    - more affordable housing,
    - cleaner water and air,
    - more walkable neighborhoods, and
  - reduced commuting times,
    - Appropriate businesses
    - Educational opportunities
    - Employment options
    - Regional cooperation and solutions
    - Housing opportunities
  - And protecting important local resources:
    - Resource Conservation
    - Heritage Preservation
    - Open Space Preservation
    - Environmental Protection
- ◆ In addition to an improved quality of life for residents, including:
  - more affordable housing,
  - cleaner water and air,
  - more walkable neighborhoods, and
  - reduced commuting times, there are a number of **quantifiable fiscal and cost benefits for businesses, developers and the local government**. Developers experience reduced infrastructure and land costs and more predictability in the development approval process and local governments benefit from reduced service delivery costs, increased tax revenues, and enhanced economic development potential.
- ◆ ***Cost Savings of Quality Growth***. Studies show that sprawling development costs government in terms of provision of public services like water and sewer, emergency services, and transportation. Research by the Real Estate Research Corporation shows that **compact growth can be as much as 70 percent cheaper** than dispersed growth patterns.

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Comparing the costs for governments in 10 counties, the University of Kentucky found that police, fire, and school services cost less in those counties where growth was concentrated and highest in those counties with scattered growth. In South Carolina, a study concluded that planned development could **save 12 percent in infrastructure costs** compared to providing the same infrastructure under sprawling growth projections. The development community saves costs as well through reduced per-unit costs for power and telephone lines, small streets, and more efficient service delivery.

- ♦ ***Protection of the Environment.*** Implementing quality growth principles like compact development, green space protection, better street connectivity, and greater opportunities for using alternative transportation leads to **less urban storm water runoff into streams to pollute our waters and less traffic exhaust to pollute our air.** A 2000 study by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of three California neighborhoods suggested that the environmental benefits of quality growth are real and can be measured. A more recent study by NRDC and EPA in Nashville corroborates this study and further suggests that the combination of better transportation accessibility and a **modest increase in land-use density can produce measurable benefits** even in automobile-oriented suburban communities. These studies are the first to evaluate actual neighborhoods rather than conceptual models. In the Nashville study, a more densely populated neighborhood closer to downtown Nashville out-performed a suburban, lower density neighborhood in terms of land consumption, water consumption, air pollutant emissions, greenhouse gas emissions, and storm water runoff.
- ♦ ***Economic Development Benefits.*** The quality of life offered by quality growth development is important to residents, and contributes to economic development. Corporations are more mobile than ever, and **quality of life is a big location factor for business.** A case in point is Hewlett Packard's decision not to construct a second office tower in the Atlanta region because of its traffic congestion and air quality. Research also shows that **perceived decline in quality of life leads to lower retention of skilled workers.** Recent surveys in Austin, Texas, show that the more educated residents are, the more likely they are to perceive

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decline, and skilled residents who do perceive decline are more likely to leave the area.

- ◆ **Public Health Benefits.** Quality growth is an emerging issue in the public health field where significant research is starting to focus on the relationship between **sprawl and obesity-related diseases** like diabetes and heart problems. Such research is underway now at the Centers for Disease Control and at Boston University's School of Public Health and is expected to demonstrate that **better development patterns improve health of community residents**. Active Living by Design, a joint program of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is devoted to issues of public health and the built environment, financing both research on the issue, and actual projects testing the impact of community design that fosters daily activity.
- ◆ **WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF YOU DON'T PLAN?** Planning is the means to thoughtful decision-making that results in creating and preserving the community that the citizens want for themselves, their children, and future generations. Without planning, the day-to-day decisions are without the context of the community's future. Here are some **negative consequences** that are likely without a plan:
  - Sprawling development
  - Incompatible land uses adjacent to each other
  - No sense of "place"
  - Deteriorating quality of life
  - Disconnected development
  - Government "chasing" development with infrastructure
  - Traffic congestion
  - Damage to environmental and natural resources

The most critical thing that happens if you don't plan is that you and your citizens have little say in how the community grows, changes, and develops.

**If you want to make a great community happen, you must plan for it!**