Modernizing Rural And Small City Development Codes: Priority Smart Growth Fixes

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Technical Assistance for
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Building Blocks-
Trends

- Nearly 2/3 of all counties classified as “rural”—75% of U.S. land area + 17% of population

- 2/3 growing…1/3 not--depends on proximity to metro areas. Places with high natural amenities and resource extraction attracting growth

- 1.2 million acres of prime ag land/10.3 million acres of forest land lost (1982-97)
The Changing Face of Rural and Small City America

**Trends**

- Multifamily housing “calamity” looming—increased demand by down-sizing seniors, young professionals, trades people, and minorities for MF vs. oversupply of single-family homes

- Rental share of housing market will increase substantially
The Changing Face of Rural and Small City America

- **Energy Issues**
  - Cost of fuel—population very reliant on autos. Liquid oil production peaked in 2008.
  - Climate change implications

- **Health issues**
  - Obesity above national rates for all age groups—rural and small city kids often less likely to walk to school or other activities
Five Types of Rural/Small City Communities—Sometimes Mix and Match

- Edge communities near metro areas
- Resource-dependent (forestry, minerals, etc.) communities
- Gateway communities (to national parks, etc.)
- Traditional Main Street communities
- Amenity-focused second home and retirement communities
Growth and Development Challenges in Small Cities and Rural Communities

- Suburban-style large-lot growth at city edges—costly to service
- Unattractive gateway strip commercial—garish signage, lack of landscaping.
- Loss of trees, natural areas, open space
- Limited housing choices
- Resistance to regulations or waivers
Defining Smart Growth

- What are the growth and development challenges facing Wakulla City?
- What are the community's assets and goals?
- How is Wakulla City connected with other jurisdictions in the region (e.g., Sauk City) and what are the opportunities?

Smart Growth Principles

- Housing Choices
- Transportation Choices
- Compact Development
- Use Existing Assets
- Mix Land Uses
- Protect Natural Resources
- High Quality Design
Smart Growth: A Response to Rural Growth and Development Challenges

- Smart Growth promotes development that provides:
  - Choices for where to live and how to get around
  - A stronger, more resilient economy
  - A healthier place to live
  - Opportunities to protect the things people love about the place where they live (e.g., open space, natural beauty, historic character)
Growth and Development Challenges in Small Cities and Rural Communities
2012 Comprehensive Plan—Key Vision Themes

- Maintain and enhance the unique character of city by promoting high-quality development
- Encourage infill and redevelopment that utilizes existing services
- Emphasize the Downtown and riverfront as the community core
- Diversify the economy and expand tourism linked with natural environment and recreation
- Maintain quality, stable neighborhoods
- Conserve and protect parks, open space, and environmental resources
Three Primary Growth Policy And Development Challenges

- Encourage infill and compatible mixed-use development
- Preserve and revitalize existing neighborhoods
- Promote orderly development in suitable outlying areas
1. DETERMINE AREAS FOR GROWTH AND PRESERVATION
2. INCORPORATE FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS INTO DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS
3. REFORM RURAL PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENTS
4. USE SMART WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE PRACTICES
5. RIGHT-SIZE RURAL ROADS
6. ENCOURAGE APPROPRIATE DENSITIES ON TOWN PERIPHERY
PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY
AND CODE FIXES

7. USE CLUSTER DEVELOPMENTS WISELY
8. CREATE ANNEXATION POLICIES THAT PRESERVE RURAL CHARACTER
9. PROTECT AGRICULTURE AND SENSITIVE NATURAL AREAS
10. PLAN AND ENCOURAGE RURAL COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
11. OFFER HOUSING CHOICES
12. DEAL WITH GHOST SUBDIVISIONS
DEVELOPMENT CODES: THREE PATHS TO SMART GROWTH

THINK B-I-G!!

- **BARRIERS**
  > Remove restrictions on multifamily residential units in Downtown and commercial zone districts

- **INCENTIVES**
  > Reduce parking requirements for mixed-use development

- **Fill Regulatory GAPS**
  > Adopt simple commercial design standards to encourage better quality
Promote Infill and Compatible Mixed-Use Development

- Remove Barriers:
  - Allow multi-family units in Downtown and upper-floor residential in downtown commercial buildings
  - Permit live/work units and multi-family in Downtown
  - Encourage multi-family in B-1 and B-2 commercial zones
Promote Infill and Compatible Mixed-Use Development

- **Create Incentives**
  - Reduce excessive MF parking requirements, especially in Downtown
  - Give credit for adjacent on-street parking
  - Adopt more moderate commercial off-street parking requirements
Promote Infill and Compatible Mixed-Use Development

- **Fill Regulatory Gaps**
  - Clarify historic preservation standards and streamline process
  - Create new Riverfront District to promote mixed recreational uses
  - Revamp B-1 commercial district to promote mixed-use projects and streamlined design review
Promote Infill and Compatible Mixed-Use Development

- Fill Regulatory Gaps:
  - Upgrade the city’s landscaping regulations
Preserve and Revitalize Existing Neighborhoods

- **Remove Barriers**
  - Revamp home occupation standards and process
  - Revamp residential setback and open space regulations to accommodate accessory structures such as garages, greenhouses, etc.
  - Investigate creating small-lot residential district or reducing the min. lot size in R-3/R-4
Preserve and Revitalize Existing Neighborhoods

- **Create Incentives**
  - Revamp non-conforming use and building restrictions to encourage renovation and improvement of homes and businesses.
Fill Regulatory Gaps:

- Adopt simple design stds to assure MF development quality and compatibility
Promote Orderly Quality Development in Suitable Outlying Areas

- Remove Barriers: Reduce Unnecessary Infrastructure Improvement Costs
  - Reduce excessive multifamily and commercial parking requirements
  - Give credit for on-street parking
  - Fine-tune residential setback developments and consider allowing smaller lots to promote housing choices
Promote Orderly Quality Development in Suitable Outlying Areas

- **Create Incentives**
  - Focus use Planned Unit Developments to build more compact single-family and mixed-use developments (e.g., smaller lots, narrower roads, reduced setbacks) in return for compensating community benefits (e.g., increased open space, recreational amenities)
  - Restrict use of PUDs to larger developments not variances
Promote Orderly Quality Development in Suitable Outlying Areas

**Cost of Development**

- No specific policy to ensure development pays its own way.
- Subdivision regulations cover open space only, not all community facilities or infrastructure (EMS, offsite road improvements, water supply, etc.)
- Future operations and maintenance costs not addressed in policy
Promote Orderly Quality Development in Suitable Outlying Areas

- **Fill Regulatory Gaps**
  - Consider demand for other city facilities and infrastructure improvements (EMS, parks)
  - Examine financing options (exaction policy, special assessment districts)
  - Fiscal impact analysis for large subdivisions and commercial projects
Promote Orderly Quality Development in Suitable Outlying Areas

- **Fill Regulatory Gaps:**
  - Adopt clear simple design, sign, & landscaping stds to enhance development quality.

*Figure 29—All primary buildings should be constructed or clad with materials that are durable, economically-maintained, and of a quality that will retain their appearance over time.*
Promote Orderly Quality Development in Suitable Outlying Areas

Simple Design Standards

Figure 5—A minimum of 30% of the off-street surface parking spaces provided for all uses contained in the development’s primary building shall be located other than between the front façade of the primary building and the primary abutting street (e.g., to the rear or side of the primary building(s)).
Smart Growth: Gateway Development Provisions

- Fill Regulatory Gaps:
  - Require bicycle parking
  - Require sidewalks from street to building entry and detached sidewalks along development perimeter
Promote Orderly Quality Development in Suitable Outlying Areas

- Fill Regulatory Gaps:
  - Revise city sign ordinance to require monument signs along gateway streets
  - Consider ban on new billboards (off-premise signs) and electronic signage
Promote Orderly Quality Development in Suitable Outlying Areas

- Fill Regulatory Gaps:
  - Upgrade the city’s landscaping regulations

Commercial Parking Lot with Infiltration
Implementation discussion and tips

INSTITUTIONAL

- Include all local government departments in drafting smart growth comprehensive plans—utilities, public works, emergency services.
- Involve other governmental agencies in setting communities goals—schools, state DOT, federal land management agencies.
- Integrate economic development planning and institutions (e.g., chambers of commerce) into community planning process.
- Coordinate with other local governments and regional planning agencies.
Implementation discussion and tips

PROCESS

- Incorporate fiscal impact analysis in all plans and development decisions.
- Don’t focus exclusively on new regulations (although important)—look at removing barriers to smart growth and sustainable development and creating incentives where possible.
- Be sensitive to impact on property values but do not be scared off by saber-rattling about “property rights.”
- Explore funding mechanisms as incentives (reduced permitting fees, cost sharing, cost recoupment from later developments, etc.)
Implementation discussion and tips

REGULATIONS

- Focus initially on removing barriers to smart growth in existing regulations,
- Level playing field for preferred development patterns vs. sprawl. Do not make it more complicated from a regulatory standpoint or more costly.
- Gear regulations and review processes to available staff resources—keep things simple!!