City of Green River officials and residents met with representatives of Smart Growth America for an intensive two day technical assistance training on August 27-28, 2014. The purpose of the training, entitled “Smart Growth Zoning Codes for Small Cities’ was to provide the City with tools to modernize the City’s development codes to promote smart growth principals, making them consistent with the goals and vision outlined in the City’s newly adopted Comprehensive Master Plan.

As was outlined in the Report and Suggested Next Steps Memo (prepared by Chris Duerksen and Roger Miller, October 17, 2014), several priority action items were identified. These included both short-term as well as longer term priorities.

As was recommended during the final working group session, staff presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission on November 12, 2014 a list of ten potential language amendments that could be considered “quick fixes” that can be in-house. The list that was presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission included:

1) Residential lot coverage/open space requirements
2) Accessory Structure Definitions, general criteria, setbacks, etc.
3) Mixed Use in Business Districts
4) Special Use/Conditional Use/Temporary Use Procedures
5) Non-Conforming Structures and Uses
6) Parking Requirements
7) Design Criteria
8) Home Occupation Process – tiered approach
9) Sign regulations – including electronic billboards
10) Landscaping Ordinance

After having a discussion regarding the items that present themselves to staff and the commission most often, the Planning and Zoning Commission decided the top three “quick fixes” to be looked at completed during the upcoming year to be (in no particular order of priority):
1) Accessory Structures (definitions, general criteria, setbacks, etc)
2) Non-conforming Structures and Uses
3) Home Occupation Process – creating a tiered approach

From the discussion, if staffing levels improve and time permits, reviewing the sign ordinance, parking ordinance and landscaping ordinance will then follow.

The Planning and Zoning Commission also agreed that in January 2015, representatives from the Planning and Zoning Commission will present to the Governing Body the list of the “quick fixes” that the commission and staff will work on. During this time, the representatives of the commission will also address the need for the Governing Body to budget for a consultant to rewrite the entire code to address the other short term and long term action items listed in the Report and Suggested Next Steps memo as it is not feasible to address all of the items under the current staffing levels of the Community Development Department.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Smart Growth America, along with the EPA, for providing the City of Green River with the opportunity to study our development codes and starting us on the right track for updating our codes to bring them in alignment with the principles of Smart Growth and the City's Comprehensive Plan. Thank you!

Laura Leigh
Director of Community Development