Regional planning for small communities
Northern Maine Development Commission
February 28, 2012

Smart Growth America . . .
. . . advocates for people who want to live and work in great neighborhoods. We believe smart growth solutions support businesses and jobs, provide more options for how people get around and make it more affordable to live near work and the grocery store. Our coalition works with communities to fight sprawl and save money. We are making America’s neighborhoods great together.

Presentation objectives
• Understand reasons for planning
• Articulate how and why planning is different in small communities
• Tools for shaping the future you want
  – Community character
  – Economic competitiveness
  – Quality of life

The “silver tsunami”
Trend is not destiny.
-Lewis Mumford

U.S. Housing Projections

Share of growth 2010-2030

Obesity Trends* Among US Adults

Housing affordability
About 58% of Aroostook County families can’t afford to buy median value home ($83,900)
What is our children’s inheritance?
- Old?
- Fat?
- Broke?
- Alone?

Some recent, more hopeful trends
- The younger generation sees cars as a burden not a ticket to freedom
- Aging baby boomers want a more active and less isolated lifestyle
- Large lot housing in suburban areas is overbuilt
- Other housing choices in all price brackets are under-built
- People are willing to trade house size for proximity to key destinations

Why plan?
“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”
-Benjamin Franklin

Why plan?
“The best way to predict the future is to invent it.”
-Immanuel Kant

Why plan?
“Have a plan. Follow the plan and you’ll be surprised how much you can achieve.
That’s why it’s easy to beat most folks.”
-Paul “Bear” Bryant

Why plan?
“You got to be careful if you don’t know where you’re going, because you might not get there.”
-Yogi Berra

Why plan?
• Respond to an evolving market
• Provide housing and transportation choices
• Make efficient use of infrastructure
• Preserve open space
• Protect critical environmental areas and sensitive land
• Reduce urban runoff
• Reduce vehicle miles traveled

Why plan Regionally?
• Jurisdictional boundaries vs. “sheds” of various types
• Economies of scale
• Larger voice for small communities

Types of plans
- Land use plans
- Transportation plans
- Economic development plans
- Housing needs assessments
- Emergency response plans
- Open space plans
- Village plans/downtown plans
- Neighborhood plans
Issues in rural/small town communities

The state we live in

Rural demographics

Urban levels of traffic

Lack of transportation choice

Lack of housing for workers

Lack of housing for families

Infrastructure capacity

Environmental issues

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005

Graph courtesy of Dr. Larry Swanson, O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, U. of Montana

Graphs courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau, Montana Department of Transportation, University of Montana, Montana Business Roundtable.
Economic viability of downtowns

Workforce development

A desire for a vibrant cultural community

A need for lifelong learning and civic involvement

Remember why you live here...

Shaping the future you want

What is smart growth?

Smart growth means building urban, suburban and rural communities with housing and transportation choices near jobs, shops, and schools. These strategies support thriving local economies and protect the environment.

Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities

Outstanding in its field

New Town at St. Charles, MO
Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place

Create Walkable Neighborhoods

Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

Encourage Transportation Choice

Mix Land Uses

Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices

Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas
Support Pedestrian Scale Development
- Support the change of street standards to meet pedestrian needs
- Bring schools, stores, offices and other uses closer to where people live
- Promote development that is designed for people not cars

Make Development Decisions Predictable, Fair, and Cost Effective

Who is involved?
- Citizens
- Neighborhoods
- Civic organizations
- Government
- Developers
- Lenders
- Designers
- Builders

The Role of Citizens
- Get educated about the importance of smart growth and spread the word.
- Get involved early in comprehensive community planning.
  - Develop leaders to create a community-based vision for smart growth
- Attend planning meetings and insist on:
  - Quality design that fits in with the community
  - Track record of success
  - Integrated with the transportation system

The Role of Business Leaders
- Attend planning meetings to support good projects
- Advocate for zoning law changes that allow for higher density and mixed uses
- Locate businesses near public transportation and existing infrastructure
- Encourage employees to actively support proposals for higher-density housing near jobs and transportation

The Role of Elected Officials
- Change the regulatory climate
  - Update our zoning/land use regulations
- Change the economic climate
  - Density bonuses
  - Tax incentives and reductions
  - Fast tracks
  - Setting aside or buying down the cost of land
- Change the dialogue
  - Educate citizens – smart growth brings new amenities, new jobs, increased Property values, new school taxes
  - Educate developers – smart growth brings new amenities, new jobs, increased Property values
- Change the political climate
  - Build citizen support for smart growth by creating a community-based vision for growth
  - Ensure citizens your will insist on quality

Leveraging smart growth concepts

Missoula Urban Fringe Development Area Project
Planning for about 15,000 new households over the next 20 years
Information and Outreach
- Three cycles of meetings
- 70+ presentations, including:
  - BCC/Mayor/Council
  - Planning Board
  - Community Forum, Neighborhood Councils, Community Councils/County neighborhoods
  - Business/Economic Development groups
  - Service clubs
  - General public meetings
- Public hearings
- Website and media

Supply of developable urban lands
- Developable Land: 5,218 Acres
- Zoned: 26,894 dwelling units
- Unzoned: 3,641 dwelling units

Infrastructure

Parks, Open Spaces, and Public Health

Scenario development

Scenario A

Scenario B

Scenario C

Suitability Analysis
Suitability Analysis

- GIS tool to assess the lands inside the Urban Services Area as to their relative suitability for residential development.
- Suitability can be defined in terms of:
  - physical and cultural limitations of the land and public services
  - community goals as expressed in the Growth Policy

City Fire travel response time

Access to Mountain Water lines

Access to City sewer

Access to roads

Access to transit and bike routes

Prime soils and open space cornerstones

Sensitive lands

Key wildlife habitat
Combined model with constrained land

Residential Allocation Map
- Annexation and zoning decision
- Infrastructure investment
- Neighborhood planning

McCall, Idaho
- A community of 7,700 people
- Boise metropolitan area, approximately 100 miles to the south
- A 5,500 acre alpine lake
- Three ski mountains and a lift served tubing hill

Zoning and subdivision ordinances
- Project commenced in late 2000
- Public review draft – July 2005
- Rewrite advisory committee – July-August 2005
- City and County Planning & Zoning Commission recommendation for adoption – December 2005
- City Council adoption – February 23, 2006
- County Commission adoption – March 27, 2006

Regional Cooperation
- Code modified to create McCall Area P&Z
- Four members appointed by Mayor with Council confirmation
- Three members appointed by County Board
- Hears all cases in City and Impact Area
- City decisions go to City Council
- Impact Area decisions go to County Board

Regional competitiveness
- Professional offices not permitted on ground floor, fronting the street in the CBD
- Ten percent formula restaurant cap
- Ten percent formula retail cap
- 40,000 SF max building footprint
- 150,000 SF max shopping center square footage
- Drive-ups prohibited in CBD

Dark sky
- New code in response to citizen input
- Protect and promote the public health, safety and welfare, the quality of life, and the ability to view the night sky, by establishing regulations and a process for review of exterior lighting
- Three years to commercial compliance
- Twelve months to residential, institutional compliance

Design review
- Process for using Design Guidelines
- The City of McCall Design Guidelines is a separate document
- Design review approval required for just about everything except a single family home less than 1,500 square feet that is not in the Scenic Route or Shoreline zones
- Subdivisions with design review procedures approved by the City would be exempt from this requirement

Affordable Housing Incentives in Zoning Ordinance
- R-16 Zone District
- 60 dwelling units/acre in CBD
- 40 dwelling units/acre in CC
- New NC zone
- Residential development in commercial zones only as a part of mixed use project
EPA smart growth grant

- Grant award – July 2005
- Workshops – October 2005
- Comprehensive plan amendment recommended by P&Z – January 2006
- Comprehensive Plan Amendment adopted February 9, 2006

Results

Lessons learned

- Seize the day
- Communicate
- Share
- Leverage
- KISS

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We have the freedom to make informed, humane, and intelligent choices about the kind of world we want to leave for our children and grandchildren. We also have the freedom to make uninformed, selfish, and stupid choices. Which will it be? - Greg Pahl