

Issues Paper on the Built Environment

Priorities

1. Promote Sustainable Development Patterns

- Reduce sprawl and support infill.
- Complete streets.
- Build at a human/local scale.
- Create quality places through Smart Growth principles.
- Conservation development to protect natural resources.
- Transit-supportive development.

2. Provide Incentives for Sustainable Choices

- For developers and builders to support mixed-use development and recharge the economic vitality of an area.

3. Public Education and Support

- A demand does exist for sustainable neighborhoods.
- Community engagement.
- Energy audits.
- Transportation options for commuting, recreation, errands, etc.

4. Offer Choices

- Variety of housing stock and price, especially for low-income and senior populations.
- Multi-modal transportation options.
- Promote mixed use development where you and live and work near one another.

Barriers

1. Special Assessments and Regulations

- Certain incentives and assessments actually promote sprawl.
- Regulations that prohibit the purchasing/redevelopment of brownfields.

2. Cost to Improve or Retrofit

- Not much focus on Return on Investment.
- It can be much cheaper to build new than to retrofit existing.

3. Public Education and Behaviors

- Make public aware of alternatives to private automobiles.

- Suburban nature of the region.
- Not much recognition of long-term costs or benefits of sustainable design and materials.
- More diverse voices should be included in decision-making.

Opportunities

1. Collaboration and Education

- Encourage denser, mixed use development where appropriate.
- Create wellness initiatives.
- Long-term comprehensive planning.
- Get citizens engaged in the planning process.

2. Provide Incentives for Sustainable Choices

- Rebates, zoning and infill incentives, expedited permit review for designated areas, density bonus, utilities.
- Tax credits for consumers.

3. Change “Default Design Standards”

- Re-evaluate street widths, parking standards, minimum lot sizes.
- Do not design the built environment solely around cars – elevate other modes of transportation to equal importance.
- Incorporate stormwater solutions to protect water quality and runoff.

Evaluating Success

1. Measurable Factors

- Increased ridership and transit trips.
- Reduced vehicle miles traveled to work and for other trips.
- Reduced personal energy consumption.
- Improved air quality.
- Increased valuation assigned to infill and retrofit projects rather than building new.
- Thriving neighborhood centers with easy access by multi-modal transportation.