

# The **Association of Towns** of the State of New York

**Making the Development Review Process a Success  
through Good Communication**



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# Builders are the Conduit between Policy (Code) and the End User



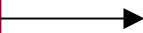
**Town Policy Makers**



**Builder / Developer**



**Housing Market**



# Objectives of Housing Policy

- **Meet the needs of a changing population.**
- **Support economic development initiatives on a regional level.**
- **Augment the revitalization efforts of our older central business districts and community centers.**

# **Policy is Shaped through:**

- **Comprehensive plans:**
  - **with proper coordination and input**
  
- **Zoning modifications that address the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.**
  
- **Planning tools available:**
  - **clustering**
  - **incentive zoning**
  - **conservation planning / easements**
  - **transfer / purchase of development rights**

# **Community Planning has Separate Components**

## **1. Long range comprehensive planning:**

- **Legislative Board implementation**
- **strategic in nature**
- **goal / performance orientation**
- **needs to establish the playing field (for both review Board and developers).**

## **2. Site plan review and approval:**

- **Planning Board implementation**
- **technical in nature**
- **code, Comprehensive Plan compliance**

# **Separating Communication between Long Range Policy & Site Plan Procedures**

- **Avoid trying to develop Comprehensive Plan policy during a Site Plan Review process.**
- **Including all stakeholders (including developers & builders) in Comprehensive Planning should reduce the need for multiple stakeholders in Site Plan Review.**
- **Site Plan communication should be on details, not changing code or policy decisions.**

# **Better Communication: Comprehensive Plan**

- **Engaging the stakeholders:**
  - **community residents**
  - **local design professionals**
  - **regional planning agencies**
  - **(sometimes) adjacent communities for regional input**
  - **economic development agencies**
  - **local business owners**
  - **builders & developers**

# Community Residents

- **What are their future housing needs?**
- **What will the needs of their children be?**
- **What are priorities in Quality of Life?**
- **What opportunities do we want our community to provide?**
- **Is their agenda beyond closing the barn door and the potential consequences of doing so?**

# Local Design Professionals

- **How can we improve the fabric of our community?**
- **What planning tools and techniques can be utilized to facilitate a more orderly growth?**

# **Regional Planning Agencies (or Communities)**

- **What long range infrastructure planning is occurring that will positively or negatively impact our community?**
  - **experience input**
  - **include “regionalism” – don’t work in a vacuum**
  
- **Economic development agencies:**
  - **goals and objectives – near term and long term**
  - **projected job growth:**
    - **types of jobs?**
    - **filled locally?**

# **Local Business Owners, C of C, Manufacturers**

- **What is necessary to insure a healthy business environment?**
- **What are their housing and other support needs?**
  - **can't promote business growth without providing workforce housing.**

# **Builders / Developers**

- **What are the market forces that are shaping demand?**
  - **if we can understand that now and plan for it, we can reduce the need for rezoning later.**
- **Understand that the builder / developer will need to implement the plan & policy:**
  - **it must be profitable to justify the risks**
- **Do not plan for needs that may not exist or miss opportunities:**
  - **builders are a valuable resource**

# **Better Communication: Site Plan Process**

➤ **Stakeholders (many are different from the Comprehensive Plan process):**

- **Planning Board**
- **Developer / Builder**
- **Public (likely more localized)**
- **Permitting Agencies**
  - **Health Department**
  - **DOT (local, county, state)**
  - **NYSDEC, Corps of Engineers**
- **Staff and Advisory Boards**
  - **sewer & water departments**
  - **planning staff**
  - **Conservation Board**
- **Technical Review Consultants**

# Planning Board

- **The Board should be reviewing the project and communicating on compliance with code, not debate policy.**
- **Has the Board developed a way to consolidate or coordinate communication, such as a “Development Review Committee?”**
- **Do the procedures allow for informal discussion?**
- **Understand the developers’ rights.**

# **Builder / Developer**

- **Communicate the need for the product and the fit with the Comprehensive Plan.**
- **Anticipate the concerns or impacts and provide the technical answers.**
- **The developer should not be expected to engage the public on policy issues.**

# **Public**

- **Communicate to the public through the Board, not necessarily directly (as with Comprehensive Plan).**
- **If a Board expects the developer to communicate with the public, they should anticipate that not all the public will be satisfied.**
- **Character of the area is important, but also is changing markets.**

## **Permitting Agencies**

- **Procedures and policy should be well defined.**
- **Early communication is important.**
- **Will likely be much slower than community procedures:**
  - **community needs to understand those challenges**
  - **builder needs to anticipate the need**

## **Staff and Advisory Boards**

- **Where much of the work should be done.**
- **Technical compliance vs. policy.**
- **Conservation Boards need to operate within their change.**

## **Technical Review Consultants**

- **Coordination with developer's consultants**
- **Little improvement with the Board; none with the public.**

# Summary

- **The most productive approach to development for both Builder & Town is to distinguish between Comprehensive Planning & Site Plan Review:**
  - **working toward consensus in the creation of a community's Master Plan can help to alleviate conflict on a project-specific basis.**
  - **issues and neighborhood pressure are unavoidable in the Site Plan Review process. We should all strive to limit debate over those issues to the context of Site Plan Review.**