

Topic:	Economic Development; Land Use Planning
Resource Type:	Guidance Materials & Scholarly Articles
State:	New York
Jurisdiction Type:	Municipal
Municipality:	N/A
Year (adopted, written, etc.):	2016
Community Type – applicable to:	Urban; Suburban; Rural
Title:	Land Use Law Center Strategies for Sustainable, Economic Development Checklist
Document Last Updated in Database:	April 22, 2017

Abstract

The Land Use Law Center created this checklist to assist municipalities in planning for sustainable, economic development. The goal is encourage use of strategies that encourage development that is environmentally conscious and economically prosperous. The checklist contains guidance on improvements in eighteen different areas, such as developing code for transit-oriented development districts and encouraging neighborhood-organized improvements.

**This document was prepared with funds provided by the New York State Department of State under the Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant Program.*

Resource



STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

July 13, 2016

“As we enter the 21st century, we have a timely opportunity to integrate, grow and balance our ambitions for economic prosperity, social equity and environmental health. Economic, social, political and environmental realities are more global, interdependent and intertwined than ever before. As the world’s population grows, demand for natural resources continues to intensify; the evidence and effects of climate change are revealing the precariousness of many of the systems we employ to bring about the increasing modernization of humanity; the turbulence of socio-political conditions indicate the growing pains of an evolving global society; and economic conditions and challenges are tightly woven into each of these circumstances. Once elusive and intangible, these seeming large-scale issues can now be addressed in a very local and immediate way. What happens at the individual and community level can easily impact outcomes at much larger scales, and vice versa.”¹

1. Incorporate sustainability in economic development programs

- Require new development to satisfy sustainability goals
- Develop approaches to integrating regulatory strategies with incentives and the use of new technologies and financing mechanisms at a scale that supports them
- Enact laws and policies that overcome market barriers
 - For example, enact policies or regulations that reduce up-front costs of energy efficiency retrofits
- Pass economic development legislation or policies that also have environmental and job creation benefits
 - For example, incentives for the use of: Renewable energy generated within the State or Region; Products manufactured within the State or region
- Provide development resources and incentives for sustainable neighborhood development in areas near public transit
- Provide authorizations for activities that increase the ability to compete in the market (such as local food production and distribution)

¹ City of St. Louis Sustainability Plan, <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/documents/upload/STL-Sustainability-Plan.pdf> (last visited July 11, 2016).

- Update zoning and land-use plans to facilitate sustainable, compact, urban, multiuse, and multiple income uses
- Eliminate zoning laws that contribute to overdependence on automobile travel and reduce quality of life
- Facilitate the development of innovative and sustainable land uses, such as urban agriculture and live-work spaces
- Support a mix of uses in districts and corridors, giving attention to surrounding uses, community need and preferences, and availability of public facilities
- Rezone to create a code that:
 - Is market realistic
 - Fosters economic investment, e.g. mixed-used districts, location of renewable energy, workforce housing
 - Protects exiting valued industries
 - Allows new business types (while avoiding conflict with existing residential uses and detracting from Central Business Districts)
 - Allows for innovative land use techniques for sustainable growth, i.e. energy conservation districts, combined heat and power and district energy systems, green and efficient infrastructure
 - Provides flexibility, e.g. overlay zoning, floating zoning, incentive zoning, special use permits, transfer of development rights
- Include built-to lines, maximum setbacks, mixed-use zoning, minimum/maximum building heights, and locate parking and garages at the rear of buildings

2. Preserve and reuse buildings

- Preserve, maintain and find new innovative uses for buildings and other cultural assets
 - This strategy reduces demolition waste, preserves embodied energy, and reduces the need for additional raw building materials
 - Prioritize historic buildings and other cultural assets that are of high merit
- Incorporate preservation at the earliest stage into comprehensive planning, small area plans, and neighborhood revitalization strategies
- Encourage property owners and developers to consider historic resources early in the development process
- Close loopholes that allow developers to avoid preservation review of projects
- Encourage adaptive/multi-functional new uses for existing historic buildings

3. Develop codes for transit-oriented development districts

- Designate areas as transit-oriented development districts
- Develop land use codes and progressive parking ordinances to ensure a dense, multi-use character
- Use existing transit lines to attract new development, and use dense development in designated areas to justify location of new transit lines and increases in service
- Provide development incentives to encourage development around established bus or train corridors that is dense and multi-use in character

- Use transit extensions to simulate development in areas ready for redevelopment

4. Prioritize infill development

- Develop dense contextual commercial and mixed-use land uses along neighborhood and district commercial areas
- Study how the distribution of amenities and necessary retail services meet the needs of neighborhood populations
- Identify desired services
- Encourage new development where goods and services are lacking
- Encourage clustering of businesses that are open at different times of day
- Encourage programming of outdoor space and neighborhood streets

5. Manage community transitions

- Develop plans for remediating distressed properties to ensure affordable housing and job development for current residents
- Ensure that existing residents enjoy safe and livable neighborhoods
- Promote affordable and workforce housing served by infrastructure including transit oriented development
 - Procure financing and grants to leverage and maximize funding
 - Create inclusionary zoning ordinances and maximize local tax incentives
- Promote affordable housing in proximity to services, retail, and transportation
- Promote diverse community mix and ensure affordability
- Support resident participation in land use planning that envisions community-wide economic improvement
- Promote local hiring

6. Create neighborhood-scale mobility plans

- Study traffic flows
- Convert some one way streets into two way streets
- Reduce travel lanes
- Widen sidewalks and tree lawns
- Create additional dedicated bike lanes
 - In order to enhance the pedestrian and cyclist experience
- Encourage communities and neighborhood associations to evaluate their pedestrian/bike friendliness and traffic flow through available assessment tools, develop mobility plans, and implement improvements
- Consider creating bike boulevards or neighborhood greenways on streets with low motorized traffic volumes and speeds to give bicycle and pedestrian travel higher priority

7. Discourage car-oriented development

- Make development of uses such as automobile services, surface parking lots, and drive-through facilities in neighborhood areas a low priority
- Develop a public parking ordinance to reduce reliance on front-loaded surface parking and establish a maximum parking level in selected areas
- Support shared district parking strategies in neighborhood centers

8. Create a safe route to school program for children

- Promote development and expansion of programs that have neighborhood residents guide students to school along neighborhood streets
- Enhance routes travelled by children around schools with streetscape and other improvements

9. Create form-based code overlay districts

- Establish procedures with the zoning code that can create new standards and promote place-making density, historic character, and active living in designated areas
- Use form-based zoning practices to preserve urban street form, high density, and multiple uses
- Ensure that buildings in neighborhood centers enable multiple uses, are street facing, and scaled appropriately for the neighborhood

10. Reinforce downtown as heart of community

- Encourage diverse office, convention, hospitality, tourism, shopping, cultural, institutional, arts, entertainment, production and dense residential uses
- Diversify and increase the efficiency and connectivity of transportation options for downtown and adjacent areas
- Study the development of public transportation
 - Establish a line that connects residents to downtown
 - Transportation improvements spurs economic growth
- Encourage alternate transportation
- Intensify the marketing strategy to retain existing and encourage new businesses to move to downtown

11. Provide and market technological infrastructure

- Develop “smart” district technology, such as fiber-optic cables and increased power grid capacity in key neighborhoods
 - This will attract and retain high-quality industrial, technology, and creative industry uses and encourage innovation and research districts
- Develop all government and school buildings as Wi-Fi hotspots to serve the surrounding community and create gathering and educational opportunities

12. Encourage neighborhood-organized improvements

- Develop BIDs and other organizations that fund private patrols, street sweeps, and streetscape enhancements in order to improve the safety and vibrancy of neighborhood streets.
- Conduct community clean-sweeps and greening initiatives
- Provide tools, supplies, and collection services to community groups

13. Design gathering spaces for people

- Design improvements for public spaces to encourage concerts, lunchtime breaks, outdoor theater, play for children and other uses that enable them to remain active
- Locate any new civic institutions, such as governmental buildings, religious institutions, post offices, libraries, and public spaces, in the heart of communities to improve accessibility and create a sense of community
- Ensure major public spaces have enhanced public transit service
- Add trees and bike corrals with benches nearby for socialization
- Increase the amount of comfortable sheltered seating at bus stops

14. Bring programs and activities to public spaces

- Create a system for nonprofits and private groups to share information, tools, and other resources to optimize their effectiveness to maintain and activate public space at minimal cost
- Increase resources for youth sports, dance classes, theater groups, and art groups that occur in public spaces and public facilities
- Develop programs that engage youth in the maintenance and improvement of public spaces through gardening, tree planting, and trash sweeps

15. Create and maintain public spaces and neighborhood streets

- Reduce the amount of asphalt play surfaces, replace with gardens, sports fields, and exercise equipment
- Create partnerships with volunteer organizations to develop service learning opportunities for school children around tree planting, planting of vegetable gardens, outdoor learning spaces in school yards, and addressing long-term maintenance issues
- Remove the legal barriers that make it difficult for outside groups to green school yards
- Partner with business and commercial districts to add activities and beautify public spaces, streetscape and parks
- Reduce impervious surfaces in public places

16. Support and increase community greenscape

- Ensure walking distance access to parks, recreation facilities and active living amenities

- Inventory neighborhoods for distribution, use, maintenance and operation of recreation facilities and open space
- Develop appropriate policies, projects, and programs to ensure that all neighborhoods meet national open space standards
- Promote development of neighborhood pocket parks and community gardens within new developments
- Engage active living, youth and senior programs to utilize open space and park facilities
- Use Adopt-a-Park and Adopt-a-Tree programs and encourage private foundation support and environmental stewardship groups.
- Update park and open space plans
- Identify under and over used recreational spaces and make recommendations for capital improvements, changes in operations and management, funding and other elements
- Implement strategic improvements and update facilities according to the needs identified in the plan

17. Use existing park and greenspace improvements to drive economic and community development

- Engage community members in improving neighborhood park as a method of increasing the value of surrounding land, building community, and fostering stewardship
- Provide resources to residents to plant streets, gardens, and native landscapes in surrounding parks and streetscapes
- Develop new, and beautify existing spaces for gathering, play and exercise
- Involve citizens in the planning process for all future park and streetscape improvements, and incorporate community stewardship into these plans

18. Engage in-place based planning and improvements

- Engage institutions, schools, neighborhood associations, and corporations to develop long-term visions and short term strategies that coincide with equitable improvement of adjacent neighborhoods
- Encourage investments by these institutions to establish safe, walk able public spaces, affordable housing, and inclusive business districts, as a means of improving their image, perception of safety, and land values
- Consider natural resources, storm water management, open space, and trees in integrated planning efforts