



PLANNING PRIMERS: LOCAL DECISION MAKING

Local and Regional Strategies, Vibrant Centers, & Site Specifics

Introduction

The following Planning Primers were modeled with permission, using narrative, bullet points, and images from the set of *Greenway Guides*, developed by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development and published in 2001. They are also based on the Jefferson County Planning Board *Growth and Development Guidelines* adopted in 2005. Their purpose is to help communities refine their decision-making, promote open discussions about future projects and ultimately enhance communities over time. They should assist communities describe local priorities in various ways, as each subdivision, site plan review, and special permit decision represents a unique set of issues and challenges. If the community agrees on basic principles or values up front, then review processes can thrive from a balanced and clear approach. Thus, by using the planning primers to discuss\illustrate local community desires, projects will be more likely to enhance communities and reflect local priorities.

Favorable Growth

Many communities welcome growth and development and the convenience and choices offered by new homes, stores, employment opportunities and services. However, a community's small town or rural character can sometimes be affected as projects occur over time. Traffic levels affect commuting and travel times, and excessive drainage, lighting glare and noise can impact existing neighborhoods. These impacts and others can cumulatively affect quality of life if left unaddressed. Similarly, growth often occurs in undeveloped open fields or forested areas where scattered homes and projects may compromise the rural character. Development that disregards rural or small town character resulting in significant impacts could be viewed as a threat to an area's way of life. How do Towns and Villages grow and change without sacrificing the character so cherished in our neighborhoods and communities? The Planning Primers illustrate considerations for communities to use when contemplating or reviewing future development. This can help maintain local character, enhance neighborhoods, and limit impacts on existing uses and priority resources.

Plan and Zoning Updates

As lots are created or new projects proposed, reviewed, and built, community development patterns become established, often for decades. Uses may change, however, networks of parcels, buildings and roads rarely revert back to open fields they once were. Therefore, Towns and Villages should address their desires and priorities, long before a project is proposed, by updating their vision or comprehensive plan and related regulations. When projects do get proposed and standards are clear regarding particular zones, uses, sites and their preferred layout, it is easy to see what matters most to a Town or Village. Otherwise, unclear requirements during project reviews are of little use and can often be polarizing to various groups as disagreements surface regarding development priorities.

Local Decisions Matter

Every municipality decides what types of projects are approved, and through the application and approval process, how they ultimately are constructed. These decisions made over time, can change neighborhoods and landscapes. Each decision can add or detract from the character of the town, village or city. Some decisions reverberate beyond municipal boundaries. Good decisions involve determining what is most desirable for the community as a whole, not merely decisions on each proposal as it comes along, perhaps with minor concessions. Those who develop cannot be blamed for projects if they follow the rules, or follow what is asked of them as projects go through approval processes. Criticism should not be placed at the feet of developers for reluctance to go back to the drawing board again and again when a planning board struggles with site specific policies. Clearly presented plans and requirements that indicate what the community wants - and may not want - can save developers and public decision makers time, money, aggravation, and even potential lawsuits. If municipalities want new buildings and project sites to be compatible with existing neighborhoods, it must be clearly stated up front. If better landscaping, pedestrian connections, or parking lot layouts are desired, then communities should clearly state those expectations in their own zoning laws.

Community Project Review examples ...



Convenience Stores



Self Storage Warehouses



Multi-family Residential



Animal Clinics



Fast Food Restaurants



Planning Primers - Index:

LOCAL AND REGIONAL STRATEGIES

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PLANNING PRIMER: FITTING INTO THE LANDSCAPE
Local and Regional Strategies, Rural Community Character

"Development should enhance and build upon community character. For example, open space, natural resource areas, and agricultural character should be preserved or restored. The sense of place, uniqueness, and quality of life of our communities."
— Growth and Development Guidelines, Jefferson County Planning Board - 2005 Text Book

Rural development as it is proposed and constructed, should fit into rural or rural surroundings rather than be superimposed as a dominant element in the countryside. Rural landscape characteristics should be addressed as part of the siting and approval process.

Why should development fit?
People desire to settle in particular areas for many compelling reasons. They do so with a reasonable expectation to enjoy and appreciate those surroundings, even after development occurs. The enjoyment of certain features and amenities that are essential qualities that attract the residents, business owners and visitors to the area in the first place.

Preferably, most new construction should be encouraged in and around villages or hamlet style groups for low density development with off road or rural access. Local planning boards can ensure that developers are blending new buildings into the landscape by requiring that they identify the natural conditions, open spaces, or other existing assets prior to submitting any plans for subdivisions or site plan approval.

Open Space System Components

- ✓ Agricultural lands
- ✓ Streams, Rivers, Lakes, Wetlands or Floodplains
- ✓ Forest or greenbelts
- ✓ Mature Tree Stands, Forests
- ✓ Views from the Road or other vantage points
- ✓ Aquatic Resource Areas
- ✓ Significant Forest Middle-stands
- ✓ Cultural Features, such as stone walls, barns, and historic buildings

RURAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

- Minimize the clearing of vegetation and natural important habitat or open space features.
- Retain stone walls, hedgerows, and other rural landscape elements.
- Locate buildings and access roads in or near these buildings and access roads in or near these areas, on existing grading, or along the edge of fields and avoid construction of open fields or on ridges.
- Locate structures and septic systems more than 500 feet from streams or ponds to protect water quality.
- Re-use farm roads or county roads whenever possible rather than constructing new wide roads.
- Maintain or enhance septic systems. Protecting the character of the landscape also protects the property's most valuable assets.

DEVELOPMENT WITH OPEN SPACE

Many farmers in the rural landscape have a great deal of open space. They are often looking for a way to use this space in a way that is compatible with their lifestyle and the surrounding landscape.

Curbing Strip Development

Strip development is a form of development that is characterized by long, narrow buildings that are spaced closely together along a road. This type of development is often associated with commercial and industrial areas.

Infrastructure Planning

Infrastructure planning is the process of identifying and planning for the infrastructure needs of a community. This includes roads, water supply, sewerage, and other public utilities.

Fort Drum Compatibility

Fort Drum is a unique community with a rich history and a strong sense of place. Any new development in the area should be designed to be compatible with the existing character of the community.

VIBRANT CENTERS Hamlets and Villages

6. Priority Growth Areas.....
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8. Redeveloping in Context.....

PLANNING PRINCIPLES: PRIORITY GROWTH AREAS
Village Centers, Hamlets and Villages

"Well construction and redevelopment should be focused over the near term expansion of development in previously undeveloped rural areas along highways that result in expansion of commercial and residential areas and services along existing and new greenbelts. Steady development into existing rural areas that may have infrastructure in place maintains the integrity of our existing community investments."
— Growth and Development Guidelines, Jefferson County Planning Board - 2005

IDENTIFY PRIORITY GROWTH AREAS AND SUPPORT FACILITIES

Priority growth areas should be established by the community. Well construction in developed areas or community redevelopment projects can take advantage of infrastructure already in place. Goals also include protecting open, scenic, historic structures and historic investment or expansion to reinforce certain areas for appropriate growth opportunities. Other new development or investment that respects local priorities can reinforce local businesses by enhancing markets, add to the business mix by providing more shopping opportunities, and help residents by creating neighborhoods. Building close to existing residential centers and established neighborhoods means more walkable and adding destinations or being nearby.

Inventory and challenge potential redevelopment sites, services and related resources:

- Vacant properties, including zoning compliance
- Incompatible structures that could be enhanced to become compatible
- Existing and planned transit and other mass infrastructure
- Open space, trails and park resources for possible linkages

Redevelopment Example: City

The example in the City of Mountain illustrates a redevelopment project with 90 multi-unit townhouses constructed adjacent to a water walking distance of amenities: ball fields, a bus rapid transit, and a city pool and two elementary schools each with their own playground facilities.

WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

Walkable communities are those that are designed to be easily navigated on foot. They feature a mix of land uses, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and a variety of transportation options.

REDEVELOPING IN CONTEXT

Redeveloping in context means that new development should be designed to fit into the existing character of the surrounding area. This includes matching architectural styles, building heights, and other visual qualities.

SITE SPECIFICS Development in Context

9. Building Placement.....
10. Parking Lots.....
11. Site Access/Traffic Management.....
12. Outdoor Lighting.....
13. Signs and Signage.....
14. Landscaping and Buffering.....
15. Water Body Protection.....

PLANNING PRIMER: BUILDING PLACEMENT
Site Specifics - Development in Context

"Growth and development should be compatible and built upon the area's unique history and cultural assets."
— Growth and Development Guidelines, Jefferson County Planning Board - 2005

New Buildings in the neighborhood context

When siting a building, building should be sited to maintain or restore street activity. Building heights and setbacks should be consistent with the surrounding area. Building setbacks should be consistent with the surrounding area. Building setbacks should be consistent with the surrounding area.

WHEN APPROPRIATE AREAS, BUILDING PLACEMENT TO THE STREET

- Follow historic patterns of building placement to maintain community character
- Cover an entire street frontage along the street
- Keep the street frontage on individual features or building entrances
- Minimize the need for front parking lots, including signs and other visual clutter
- Use more pedestrian friendly siting strategies as businesses are often closer together
- Make it easier to separate vehicle circulation and pedestrian
- Protect pedestrians from having to cross large parking areas
- Eliminate the need for large signs and other visual clutter
- Minimize driveway views of parking areas

PARKING LOTS

Parking lots should be designed to be functional and aesthetically pleasing. They should provide adequate space for vehicles and be easily accessible to the surrounding area.

SITE ACCESS/TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Site access and traffic management are crucial for ensuring the safety and efficiency of a development. This includes designing clear routes for vehicles and pedestrians, and implementing traffic control measures.

OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Outdoor lighting should be designed to provide adequate illumination for safety and security. It should be placed strategically to highlight architectural features and create a pleasant atmosphere.

SIGNS AND SIGNAGE

Signs and signage should be designed to be clear, legible, and consistent with the surrounding area. They should provide necessary information to visitors and enhance the overall appearance of the development.

WATER BODY PROTECTION

Water body protection is essential for maintaining the health and beauty of our natural resources. This includes implementing erosion control measures, riparian zone buffers, and other best management practices.

Available on the web at:

<http://www.co.jefferson.ny.us>

Then click on Departments, Planning, Planning Primers