2030 Comprehensive Plan Update

TRENDS AND ISSUES TO CONSIDER

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan was adopted by City Council in 2009. During the adoption process, staff and City Council committed to an annual review where emerging trends could be identified and analyzed. The following trends are a compilation of issues spotlighted in the 2011-2014 Annual Progress Reports and a review of current planning literature, best practices, and public feedback. They are grouped around the six vision themes of the Comprehensive Plan.

Economic Prosperity and Equity
- Innovation Districts
- Sharing Economy

Expanding Housing Choices
- Affordable Housing
- Lifecycle Housing

Managing our Growth
- Implementation Models
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- Scenario Planning

Coordinating Land Use and Transportation
- Autonomous Vehicles
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- Multi-modal Transit

Greenprint Raleigh—Sustainable Development
- Local Food Systems
- Resilient Communities

Growing Successful Neighborhoods and Communities
- Citizen Engagement
- Healthy Communities

BACKGROUND
Staff reviews trends on an annual basis and identifies those that may impact the 2030 Comprehensive Plan. General maintenance of the Plan is important: examination and inclusion of recent trends keeps the Plan relevant. These emerging issues are being considered in the five year update.

Economic Prosperity and Equity

Innovation Districts: Innovation Districts seek to cluster established and developing companies of various sizes to support collaboration and innovation. These mixed use districts can include office, residential and retail uses, as well as well-maintained public spaces and transit access for round the clock activity and social interaction. A growing number of companies are seeking to co-locate with related businesses in environments that blur the lines between work and play and that allow workers to mingle and share ideas. Innovation Districts are a physical change in response to major economic and demographic trends. They reflect a shift away from physical isolation toward open innovation and collaborative efforts among businesses and institutions, as well as a growing desire among workers for livable, walkable, connected places.

Sharing Economy: The sharing economy describes a range of activities, services, spaces and goods that represent an alternative to the individual ownership economy. Best exemplified by things like carsharing, bikesharing, cooperatives, community farms, shared housing and shared workspaces, the sharing economy has the potential to impact city form and infrastructure, city coffers, and human interactions and relationships. The sharing economy is currently focused in four general areas: transportation, food, housing and job creation.

Expanding Housing Choices

Affordable Housing: One of the major trends identified during the drafting of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan was the magnitude of population growth, particularly as the City and region continue to receive acclaim. The Plan provides policy guidance consistent with a significant increase in population over the course of the next 20 years. The provision of affordable housing within the reach of individuals of limited economic means continues to be a challenge given our rate of growth. The recent trend of redevelopment of older multi-family complexes on large parcels in convenient locations for other housing types serving a more affluent market segment further erodes our affordable housing stock.

Lifecycle Housing: Lifecycle housing provides a range of housing types to accommodate all stages in life; from compact multi-family dwellings for the young professional, to single family detached housing for a growing family, to patio homes and condominiums free of maintenance for empty-nesters, to assisted living and congregate care for the elderly population. This type of development would provide the entire spectrum of housing within a confined area, so a person could live in one neighborhood his or her entire life – preferably in a walkable, mixed use environment that provides a range of life needs close at hand.

Managing our Growth

Return on Investment: In the financial world, the return on investment is the measure of success of a monetary action, calculated in dollars. Simply, an investor seeks a return on the amount of capital expended. A return on investment from the municipal infrastructure standpoint is similar. The City expends capital funds to improve infrastructure. The desire in upgrading facilities is not only to fill a service gap, but to encourage private investment as a result of recent upgrades. This private investment would provide a return on the City's investment by way of increased tax base, new jobs, or revitalization of a key area.

Scenario Planning: A growing trend in planning is the practice of scenario planning. Asking 'what if?' during small scale project development or large scale area planning is inherent to the planning process. Historically, to answer this question required a large amount of staff time to produce manual calculations and drawings. New and developing technology allows the input and manipulation of baseline data and produces two- or three-dimensional graphics. These powerful planning tools enable staff to extend capacity to more routinely scenario plan for different contexts. It provides citizens and decision-makers with useful information to identify impacts during the rezoning process, the effect of growth on a larger area or region, or identifying the return on investment for capital improvement projects.

Implementation Models: In a time of fiscal constraints and questioning of the role of government, successful implementation is vital to establish the value of planning. For the comprehensive plan, this means establishing priorities, responsibilities, and timeframes; effectively allocating resources; developing new implementation models; using targets and metrics to monitor progress; and communicating stories of success. The traditional model of separate topical elements is being replaced by an approach that views these topics as complex systems whose interactions determine the form and function of an even more complex system—the community as a whole.

Coordinating Land Use and Transportation

Autonomous Vehicles: Recent technological advances and private investment have brought commercially-available self-driving vehicles closer to reality. The potential for this technology to reshape transportation patterns, travel habits and urban form makes it an important emerging issue for urban areas. Widespread use of autonomous vehicles is still many years away; however several automakers will likely have self-driving models commercially available as early as 2017. But as these vehicles have the potential to be revolutionary and transformative, it is not too early for cities to begin thinking about the implications for land use and transportation planning. For example, city policies regarding parking and density will influence the economics of autonomous taxis/carsharing versus private vehicles. Further, the incorporation of autonomous technology into transit vehicles would radically change the cost structure of that industry.

Complete Streets: A rising chorus of communities has embraced the need to design and plan streets for all users under the mantle of "Complete Streets." This philosophy aims to reduce barriers for alternative transportation modes such as walking, biking, and transit on public streets, while allowing flexibility to decide when certain streets should prioritize one mode above others. A Complete Streets policy would be applied by the City for public projects, development standards, and even maintenance activities in the transportation realm.

Multi-modal Transit: The 2030 Comprehensive Plan identifies nine priority transit corridors across the City. There are a variety of transit choices and options such as light rail, bus-rapid transit, modern streetcar and traditional bus service. The suitability of each corridor for various modes depends upon a variety of factors, including traffic, existing and future development, and available right-of-way. The choices made in updating the Wake County Transit Plan will have a significant effect on the character of land use and development along these corridors.

Greenprint Raleigh—Sustainable Development

Local Food Systems: An emerging trend in food production and distribution is local food sales. This is the concept of production, delivery and consumption of a locally grown product. Local food systems have grown in popularity during the past decade. Locally grown products can have a positive impact on the local economy and lessen the demand on the environment. Much of the incentive for local food systems is derived from the federal or state level, and usually takes the form of policy or monetary supplement. On the local level, policy guidance and land use regulations can play a part in the advancement and support of local food systems. The Plan currently contains language regarding urban agriculture and community gardens.

Resilient Communities: More frequent natural disasters such as heat waves, droughts, floods, and storms, along with man-made ones such as hazardous materials accidents and others, threaten our health and safety, our economic prosperity, our energy security, and our way of life. Local governments are on the front lines of these challenges and must respond. In the face of such threats, a resilient community withstands and sustains such impacts without impacting the overall community health. Resilient communities are defined as those that have the ability to bounce back from adverse situations by actively influencing and preparing for economic, social, and environmental change.

Growing Successful Neighborhoods and Communities

Citizen Engagement: Increasing inequality—not just in economic status but also in basic quality-of-life issues such as health outcomes and vulnerability to disasters—is a major national and global concern. Rapid advances in digital technology are transforming the ways citizens can be involved in the comprehensive planning process. At the same time, a critical need exists to reach groups that are traditionally underrepresented in the process.

Healthy Communities: An increasing awareness toward healthy communities has prompted further analysis of the relationship between our built environment and our health. The design of our cities can have a profound effect on overall health indices for the community at large. The availability of convenient sidewalks that encourage pedestrian use, reduction of pollution from transportation and industry, provision of open space for active recreation – these are just some of the means by which city form can lead to subtle shifts in lifestyle and activity levels that affect long-term health outcomes.