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TERRA FIRMA

YOUR GUIDE FOR SOLID LAND USE PLANNING

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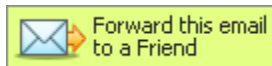
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UNLOCK THE INNOVATION MYSTERY: 3 Easy Keys To Success

Those involved in land planning and development must continuously strive towards new, innovative ways to produce better projects. Innovation scares some people though. This hesitation can result in roadblocks, costly delays and, potentially, deadlocked projects. All innovators need to be able to communicate their ideas in a way that turns resistance into support. This is essential in land use planning.



Here is a three-part plan to help set innovative projects on solid footing and make them a success.

1. SIMPLICITY. If your innovation is too complicated, it will not be embraced by the masses. Keeping it simplistic in nature will allow people to want to try it, to want to promote it and to even consider changing how they might have done it. People inherently do not want to have to work at trying to understand something. If it is simple and seems like common sense, they are more likely to use it. It's simple to keep your innovative idea simple.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY. You are responsible for your innovation. You have to be accessible and be able to explain and teach others about your innovative practice. Many an innovation has failed due to the authors or inventors not being accountable for it. You cannot abandon your innovation.

3. COLLABORATION. The best innovations are designed through collaboration. Using a multi-disciplinary effort w

often yield a well-vetted product with trouble shooting having occurred across a multitude of perspectives. Put your own ego aside, work with others and be creative. Undoubtedly, together you will come up with something innovative and effective.

To achieve project success, we need to keep policies and projects simple to be understandable. We need to be accountable for the decisions that we make and the projects that we design. We need to collaborate with others who have different interests and objectives in order to make our projects better.

For project success, follow the innovation formula:

SIMPLICITY+ACCOUNTABILITY+COLLABORATION



THE DEAD END DENSITY DEBATE



In land use planning, the "D" word finds itself at the center of many debates, discussions, and denials. I would suggest that we no longer use the word "density." What does it even mean? The term is subjective. What is dense to you, may not be dense to me. Millions of folks choose to live in rural America, others opt to live in the mono-culture that suburbia, and true urban dwellers make their lives in New York City or LA. So while density may not seem good to all of us, it cannot be all bad.

I personally think density is misunderstood. We need to place our focus on responsible land use planning and land development patterns. Whether you are in a rural area, the suburbs or the city, the inefficient use of resources and services is really the heart of the issue, not density. Concentrating uses in a smaller urban footprint rather than sprawling development patterns allows for a better provision of all public services - water, sewer, police, fire and emergency medical services, for example. It has been widely researched that low-density development inevitably leads to higher development costs for both the developer

and the taxpaying public.

Putting services and amenities close to the numbers of people needed to support them also reduces traveling time for people. A reduction in travel time allows for less car pollution and in many cases, for the need for automobiles altogether. Couple that with the provision of efficient and affordable public transportation systems and the positive outcomes grow exponentially. With the rising cost of fuel, these are things we need to consider.

The keys to responsible land planning are:



Variety: Avoid the monotony of a single type of build design or use. Changing building types, size and use allow for varied separation between buildings, interest, and the accessibility of goods and services in close proximity to consumers.



Scale: Density should be feared if a new building is not in keeping with the existing neighborhood design and context. Careful thought should be given to the scale of a structure, which should be kept in the context of the existing neighborhood.



Interconnectivity: A development that is heavily interconnected allows for a more intimate pedestrian experience - it allows options for differing paths to and from goods and services.




Efficiency: Thoughtful planning of the location of public services and facilities enables the best delivery of goods and services. The efficient provision of services reduces waste in terms of water, energy, pollution, materials and time.

An increased amount of density is needed to support the timely and efficient provision of services and non-residential land uses, however, focusing on the density needed can prove to be deadly to your project. People just don't understand there are benefits to density, nor do they understand the economics of the issue. Instead they fear because it is an unknown to them.

I would suggest to you that the next time you find your project's proposed density facing a denial from local government officials, change your approach. Leave the density debate at the doorstep and shift the focus to all of the other positives of your project. If you have properly planned for your goods and services, mixed land uses and provided appropriate interconnectivity throughout, when you choose to not engage in the density discussion, your

project's best features will shine through and your chance for a successful approval with adequate density will increase.

 **MEGRATH CHOSEN AS 2008
RECIPIENT OF "40 UNDER 40"
AWARD!**



Allison D. Megrath, AICP, of Land Planning Solutions, Inc. was selected as one of the forty winners in the eighth annual Gulf Coast Business Review's "40 Under 40". The award was established to honor successful young corporate executives and entrepreneurs who take on the mantle of leadership at a young age.

Land Planning Solutions, Inc. is a Naples-based land planning consulting firm of which Megrath is the President and Principal Planner. She has been a professional land planner since 1993 and accepts this award as great honor. "It feels good to be recognized for hard work and patience," Megrath said when asked about this award. "To be president of a successful company and doing what you love for a living before the age of 40 doesn't happen to everyone. I feel privileged to be among the amazing pool of 2008 winners."

The 2008 class of honorees consisted of engineers, planners, land developers, entrepreneurs, financiers, and representatives of many other professions. The nominees were evaluated on the basis of career accomplishments, levels of expertise and responsibility in their fields and community involvement. This year, 16 women were issued the award. Land Planning Solutions, Inc. was recently certified by the State of Florida Office of Supplier Diversity as a Minority Business Enterprise as a woman-owned business.

For more information about Gulf Coast Business Review 2008 "40 Under 40" recipients, please go to www.review.net.

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