How Cool is Your Town?
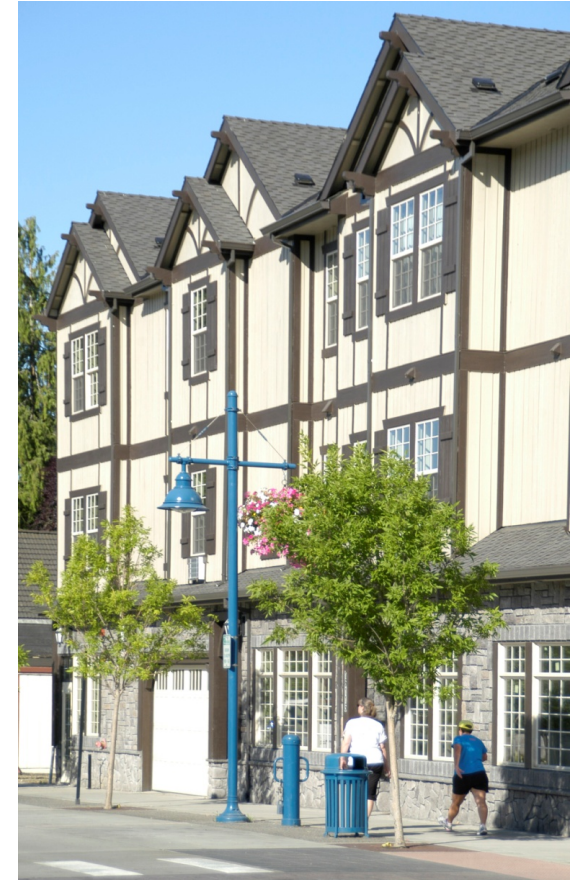
Council Meeting

Tuesday, March 13, 2012

What is Smart Growth?

Smart Growth: planning principles directed at developing sustainable communities that are great places to live, to do business, to work, and to raise families

■ Smart Growth is About Choices

- Creates great places:
  - Healthy, attractive, desirable communities
  - Places where people want to be
  - Family-friendly
  - Live, work, shop and play
- Good for the environment
- Good for the community

Smart Growth: You Can Get There

- Local growth and development decisions affect how we get around

- How we get around affects our climate
  - Greater need to drive
  - More miles travelled
  - More greenhouse gas emissions

- Policies/decisions can be changed
  - Reduce carbon emissions
  - Make more desirable places
  - Increase economic competitiveness
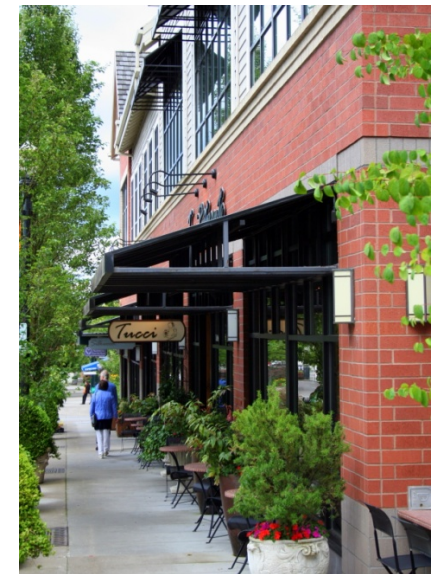
Cool Planning Handbook
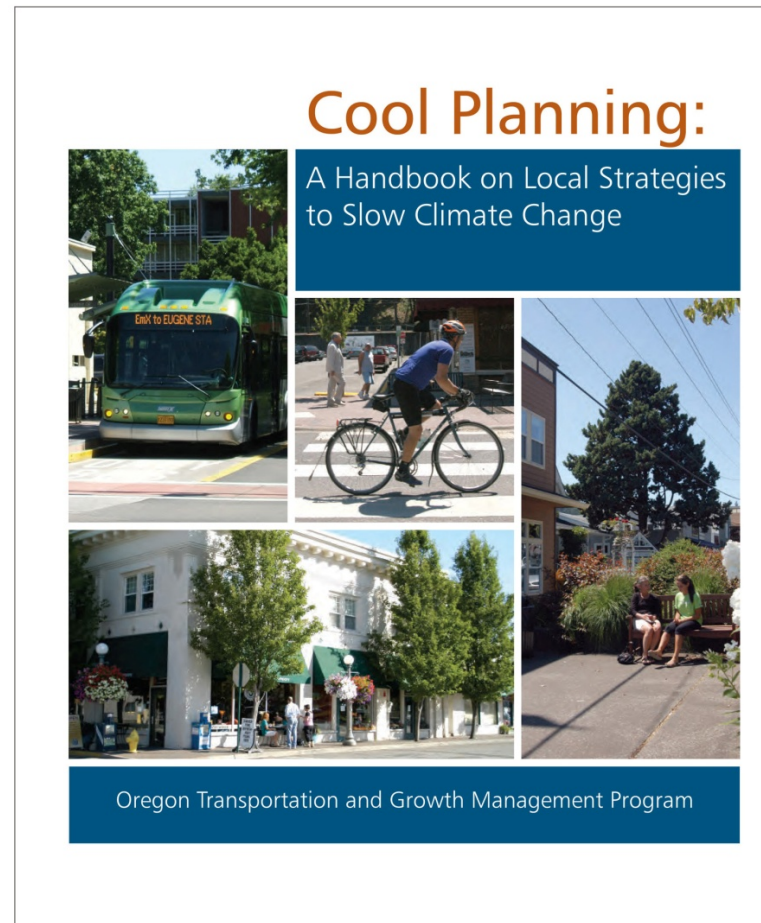
Cool Planning Strategies

1. Get Centered
   - Create a vibrant, attractive town center

2. Grow More Compact
   - Density dividend
   - Avoid sprawl and minimize travel

3. Make Streets More Complete

4. Make Way for Pedestrians

5. Make Your City Bike Friendly for All

6. Put Parking in its Place

■ Grow More Compact

- Housing trends shifting to more compact types

- Density dividend:
  - Lower density = more traffic
  - More compact = better access to amenities, services, schools, less traffic
  - Growing demand for well-designed, compact development
  - Infrastructure cost efficiencies

- No "one size fits all" solution

Get Centered

- Provide combination of uses & services
  - Main Street and activity centers, not strip malls
  - Avoid spreading economic viability too thin
- Key benefits:
  - Improved tax base
  - Decrease infrastructure costs
  - Improved quality of life
  - More vibrant street life
  - Reduced need to travel

Make Streets More Complete

- Streets serve variety of purposes
  - Moving goods and services
  - Walkways for pedestrians & shoppers
  - Travelways for bicyclists
  - Public meeting places
- Maximize number of people & functions the street may serve
- Our most important public places
  - Attractive streetscaping matters

Make Way for Pedestrians

- Walkability = successful places
  - Safe
  - Convenient
  - Accessible
  - Attractive
- Less traffic
- Makes it easier to get from place to place
- Good for business

Make Your City Bike Friendly

- Well-connected continuous systems
  - Make it easy to "get there" by bike
  - Identify and close the gaps
  - Bike lanes, off-street multi-use paths
- Make it easy to "be a biker"
  - Provide amenities (bike parking, signage, maps)
- Good for families
  - Safe routes to school & activities
- Good for business

Put Parking in its Place

- Create great places for people, not cars
  - Avoid providing more parking than needed
  - Bring buildings forward to the sidewalk
  - Put parking on the side or behind buildings
  - Screen parking lots from view
  - Landscape parking lots
  - Make parking a good neighbor

■ Workshop Overview: Issues

- Growth is coming, need to prepare

- Getting to school:
  - Congestion
  - Lack of continuous sidewalks
  - Lack of bicycle network

- Infrastructure constraints/issues
  - Sewer
  - Stormwater
  - Street crossings

Workshop Overview: Issues

- Condition of existing buildings
- Identify/enhance "special place"
  - Events
  - Heart of town
- Quality of shopping environment
- Need more rooftops close-in
- Facilities/activities for youth
- Parking
  - For business and employees

Workshop Overview: Opportunities

- Identify centers/sites for focused action
- Preserve hometown feel/identity
  - Local shops, not chains
  - Creative opportunities for business start-up
  - "Kimberly scale" development
- Providing smaller housing types for aging and changing demographic
- Plaza or festival street
- Mixed-use development
  - Vertical and horizontal

Workshop Overview: Opportunities

- Capitalize upon historic buildings and "main-street" feel

- Communicate envisioned type and direction of growth to developers and realtors

- Re-use underdeveloped/brownfield properties

- Parking delineation & expansion

Workshop Overview: Actions

- Conduct market research
  - Types and levels of devt that market can support
  - Don't "overdevelop", develop the right stuff
- Focus first on redevelopment
- Prepare for new development
  - Examine zoning and standards
  - Processes and tools
  - Incentives

Workshop Overview: Actions

- Test before build
  - Temporary curb bulb-outs
- School campus circulation study
- Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
  - Focus/prioritize spending

How Do We Move Forward?

- Create an action plan
  - Builds local partnerships
    - Common objectives
  - Better positioning for grants
  - Keeps community focused
    - Builds & maintains momentum

Action Plan

What's in an Action Plan?

- Regulatory changes
- Projects
- Actions & partnerships
- Sources of funding
- Time frame for initiating actions

Action Plan

Three step process:

- Identify what needs to be done

- Prioritize actions
  - Short-term
  - Mid-range
  - Longer-term

- Program actions:
  - Develop short-term (3-year) program

Action Plan

Recipe for success:

- Identify Year 1 tasks needed to set you up for Year 2

- Repeat for Year 2 and Year 3

- As Year 1 is completed:
  - Year 2 becomes new Year 1
  - Year 3 becomes new Year 2
  - Add a new Year 3

■ Action Plan

Keep it moving!

- Monitor progress

- Report on progress

- Update regularly
  - Involve "planning partners"

Bottom Line

- Smart growth/cool planning
  - Improved tax base thru higher-value development
  - Reduced infrastructure expenditures
  - Reduced travel and carbon emissions
  - Proactive as opposed to reactive
- It's the right thing to do now!