
Community Builders Institute

Crash Course II

Planning for Commercial Development

Presented By:

Donald J. Poland, MS, AICP

Don Poland Consulting

E-mail: don@donaldpoland.com

Web: www.donaldpoland.com

Phone: 860.655.6897

Planning for Commercial Development

Presentation Overview

- I. Planning and Land Use
- II. Fundamentals of Real Estate Development
- III. Fundamentals of Economic Development
- IV. Understanding the Land Use Approval Process
- V. Positioning Communities for Economic Development
- VI. Understanding Planning and Development as a System
- VII. A Perspective on Sustainability and Smart Growth

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Planning for Commercial Development

Part I. Planning and Land Use

Planning for Commercial Development

Understanding Planning

What is Planning?

- Preparing for the future
- Dealing with problems of the past
- A systematic approach to problem solving
- A strategy for improvement
- Predicting the future with *the risk of being wrong*
- A continual process of learning and adjustment
- A process to achieve desired outcomes.

What Planning is NOT?

- Design standards
- Streetscapes
- Zoning and regulations (including form based codes)
- Smart Growth Strategies
- Traditional Neighborhood Design
- Transit Oriented Development

The above are specific tools
And strategies that may be used to
implement plans.

Planning for Commercial Development

General Planning Consideration

- We must realistic about where we are planning.
- What scale of community are we planning for?
 - Central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural
 - Village
 - State or Regional?
- The size and type of community will dictate the scale of development we plan for.



Planning for Commercial Development

General Planning Consideration

- We must realistic about what we are planning for.
- What scale and type of location are we planning for?
 - City center
 - Town center
 - Neighborhood service
 - Retail strip
 - Office or industrial park
 - Regional Center - downtown



Source: Jim Gibbons CBI Crash Course II PowerPoint

Planning for Commercial Development

General Planning Consideration

- We must realize that how we plan and the strategies we use will be different based unique circumstances of the community.
 - Just because something work in one community does not mean it will work in our community.
- Are we planning for new development?
- Are we planning for redevelopment?
- Is the market strong, soft, or weak?
 - Are we growing, stagnating, or declining?



Planning for Commercial Development

General Planning Consideration

- We must realistic about the types of development that we are planning for.
- Are we planning for residential, retail, office, industrial, or mixed use?



Planning for Commercial Development

General Planning Strategies

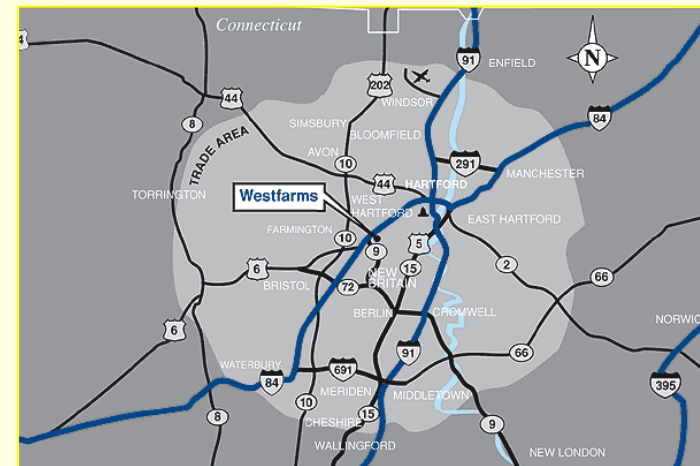
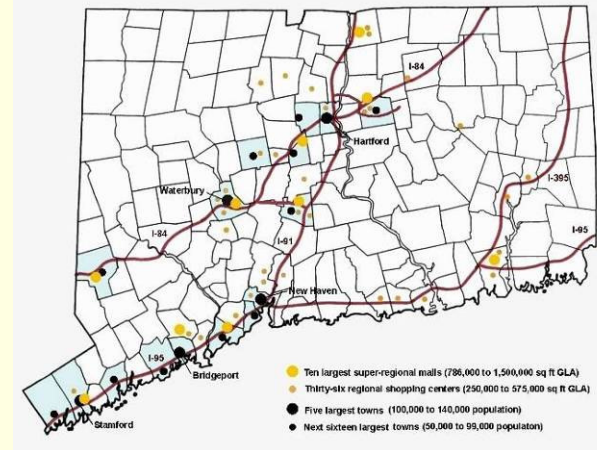
- We must intentional in what it is we want (while being realistic).
- We must be intentional in our actions—strategies and implementation.
- We must understand that there are no simple solutions to the complex challenges and problems.
- “There is no substitute for knowledge. Hard work, best efforts, and best intentions will not by themselves produce quality nor market.” (Deming, *The New Economics*, 1993)



Planning for Commercial Development

Community Assessment

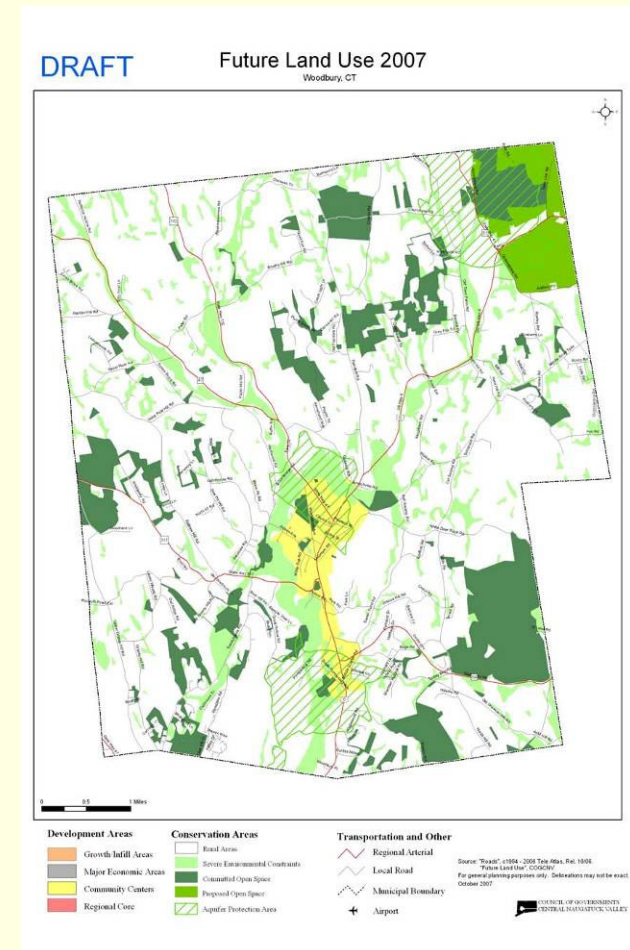
- We must have good information.
- We must be realistic about the market and the types of business that can be supported in the local market.
- What is the market?
 - Neighborhood
 - Community
 - Region
 - State



Planning for Commercial Development

Plan of Conservation and Development

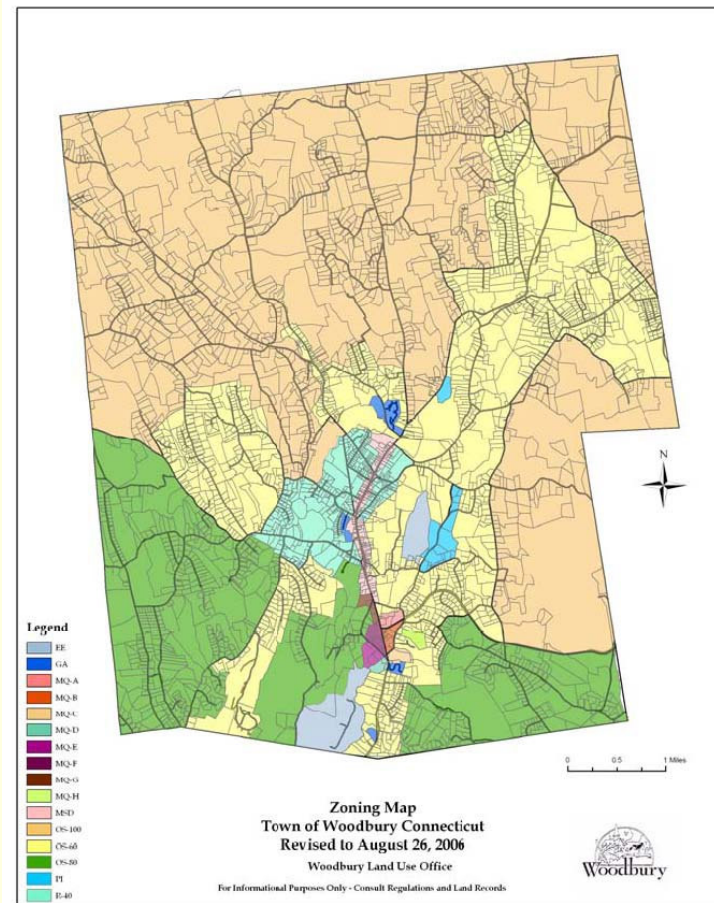
- Community level planning starts with the Plan of C & D
- Update the Plan of C & D regularly.
- Clearly identify the community vision, objectives, goals, and outcomes for economic development.
- Clearly state what it is the community wants for commercial development.
- Once you know what you want, develop strategies to encourage it.



Planning for Commercial Development

Zoning Regulations and Map

- Update the Zoning Regulations to ensure they are user friendly.
- Clearly identify the types of businesses the community wants (uses).
- Clearly identify the style of development (site design standards) the community wants.
- Provide clear application and permit approval standards.
 - Swift
 - Simple
 - Certain



Planning for Commercial Development

Unrealistic Assumptions and Practices

- Numerical goals with no method to achieve them
 - “We will increase our commercial and industrial grand list from 7% to 10% in the next five years.”
 - What is the plan to accomplish this increase?
- Planning for developments that are unlikely to locate in the community.
 - A rural community with no Interstate highway access and 10 miles from the nearest access ramps developing plans for an industrial park.
 - When other neighboring communities have direct highway access, why would they locate in your community?
- Design improvements and streetscape will overcome weak or soft market conditions.
 - Aesthetics alone will not solve market problems.
 - How can we leverage design programs to encourage private investment?
- Simple solutions to complex issues.
 - “Instant Pudding” - Code enforcement will eliminate blight.
 - What are the weak market conditions causing blight and abandonment?

Planning for Commercial Development

Reorganize Regulations to be User Friendly

Why?

- Eliminate duplication-group same or similar requirements into meaningful chapters and section headings.
- Write in plain English. Avoid technical jargon.
- Avoid too many cross-references.
- Utilize tables for uses to reduce language, pages, and to create greater ease of use.
- Utilize tables for parking requirements by use.
- Provide diagrams to demonstrate design requirements...a picture is worth a thousand words.

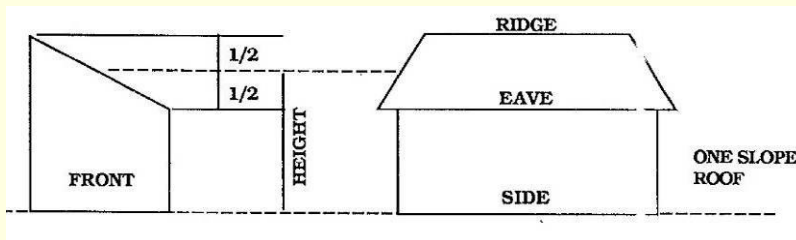
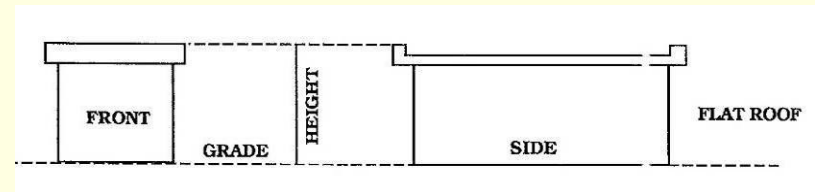
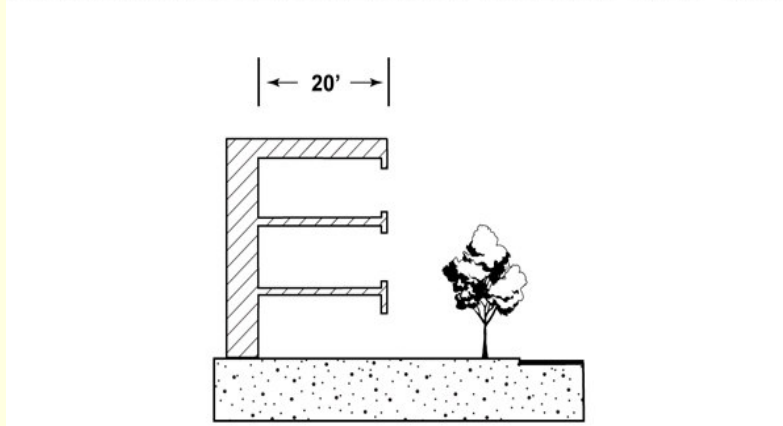
Reorganization - Chapters

1. Power and Authority
2. Interpretation and Definitions
3. General Regulations – All Zones
4. Residential Regulations
5. Commercial and Industrial Regulations
6. Site Development Regulations
7. Special Permit/Exception Criteria
8. Special Regulations
9. Administration and Enforcement

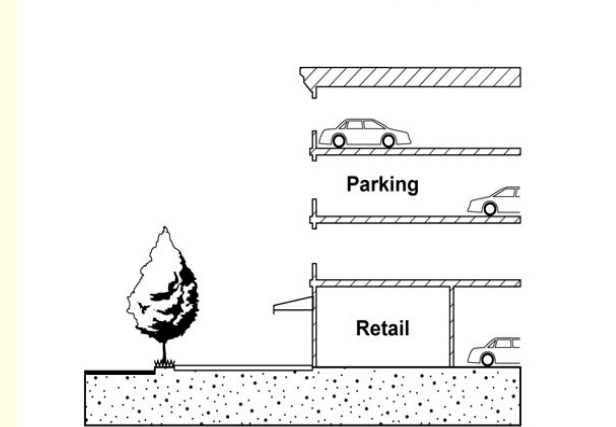
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Utilize Graphics and Diagrams to Explain Regulations

COMMERCIAL BUILDING CROSS-SECTION



PARKING STRUCTURE ELEVATION

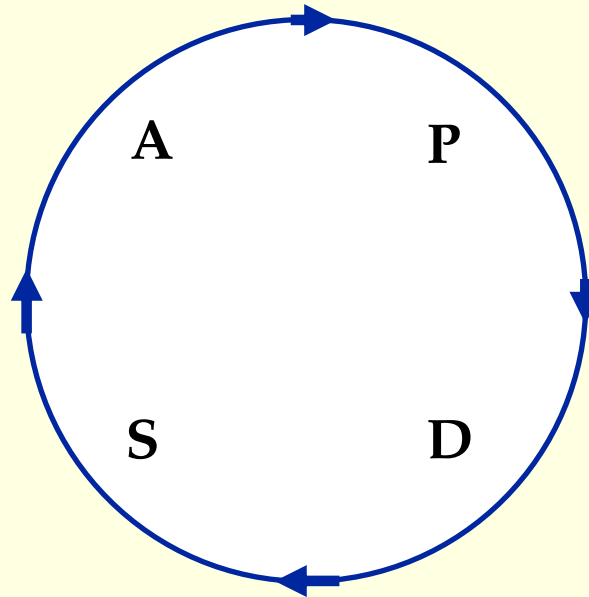


Planning for Commercial Development

Plan – Do – Study – Act: The PDSA Cycle of Learning

4. **Act** - Adopt the change, or abandon it, or run through the cycle again.

3. **Study** - the results.
What did we learn?
What went wrong?



1. **Plan** - a change or a strategy, aimed at improvement.

2. **Do** - Carry out the change or strategy (preferably on a small scale)

The PDSA Cycle of Learning and Improvement begins with an idea (a solution to an issue or problem—a means for improvement). The Cycle of Learning and Improvement starts in the **Planning Stage** with consideration of the questions “**What are we trying to accomplish?**” “**What are the desired outcomes?**”

Planning should be flexible, continual, and ongoing process that we learn from.

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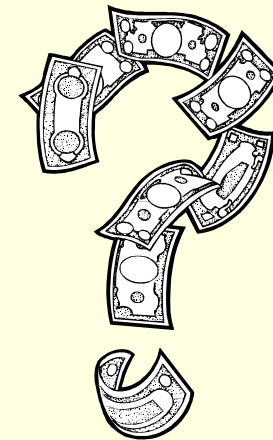
Part II. Fundamentals of Real Estate Development

Fundamentals of Real Estate Development

General Overview

■ Understanding the Development Process

- Basic market research
- Evaluating/establishing demand
- Analysis of potential sites
- Engineering feasibility
- Financial feasibility
- Design development
- Land Use/Development Permitting
- Financing
- Construction
- Occupancy/opening/operations
- Property management



Fundamentals of Real Estate Development

General Overview

- Basic Economic Feasibility (Development cost V's Return on Investment)
 - What are the land costs?
 - What are the construction costs?
 - What are the market rents?
 - Can area rents cover the cost of development and operation? (Typically assumed over seven years)
 - If costs exceed potential returns based on market rents, the project most likely will not work.



Fundamentals of Real Estate Development

General Overview

- Basic Economic Feasibility (Development cost V's Return on Investment)
 - What are the land costs?
 - What are the construction costs?
 - What are the market rents?
 - Can area rents cover the cost of development and operation? (Typically assumed over seven years)
 - If costs exceed potential returns based on market rents, the project most likely will not work.
 - Same is true for redevelopment (vacant properties).
- Calculating Cost vs ROI (Sample)
 - Land Cost = \$1,000,000
 - Construction Costs = \$200/sq. ft.
 - $\$200/\text{sf} \times 30,000\text{sq. ft.} = \$6,000,000$
 - Total Cost = \$7,000,000
 - What are the market rents? Can area rents cover the cost of development? (Typically assumed over seven years)
 - $\$7,000,000 / 7 \text{ years} = \$1,000,000$
 - $\$1,000,000 / 30,000 \text{ sq. ft.} = \33.33 per square foot
 - Do market rents support a minimum of \$33.33/sq. ft.?
 - If not?

Fundamentals of Real Estate Development

General Overview

- The Challenges to Real Estate Investment
 - Permitting process
 - Legal challenges
 - Competitors
 - Time
 - interest rates
 - construction costs
 - tenant interest
 - availability of capital

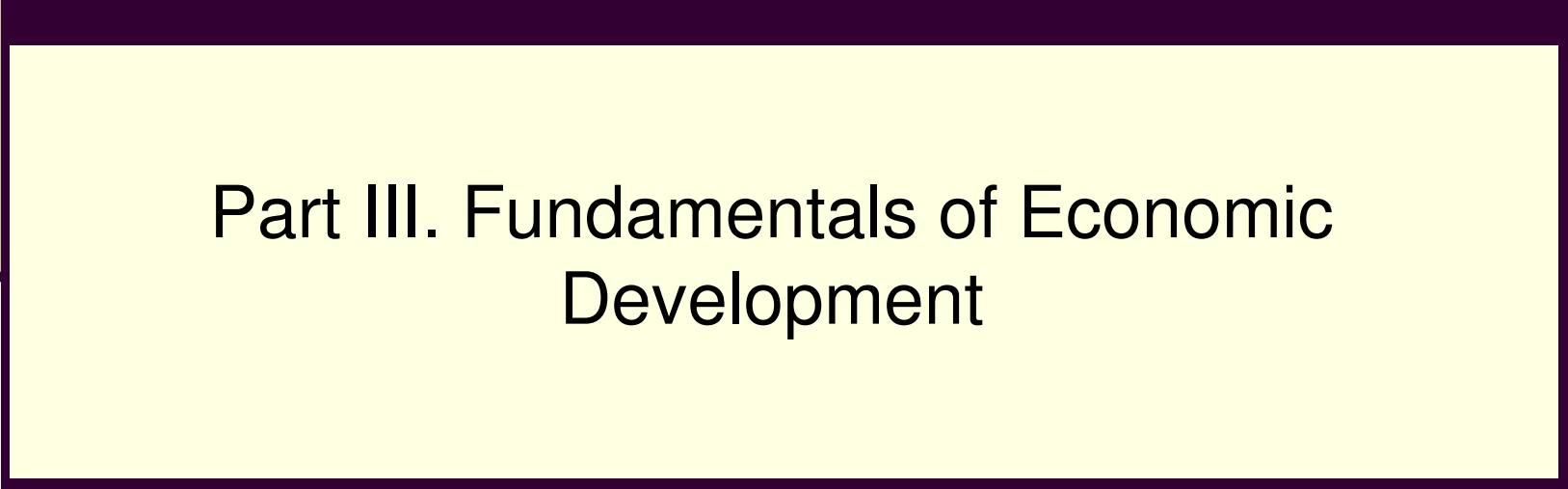


Source: Jim Gibbons CBI Crash Course II PowerPoint



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Part III. Fundamentals of Economic Development

Fundamentals of Economic Development

General Overview

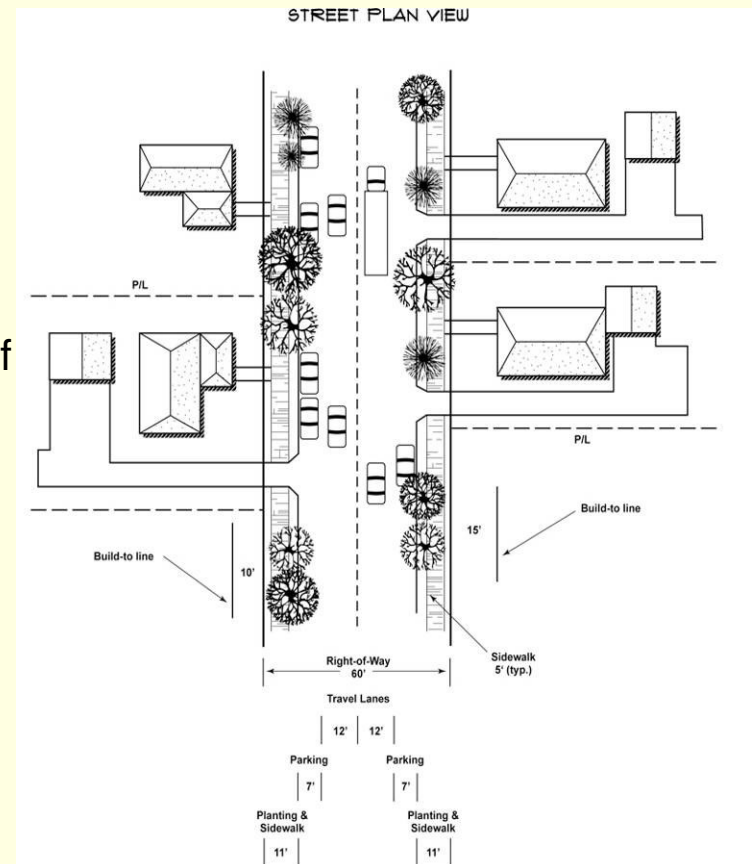
- Economic Development Defined:
 - The Business of Attracting Investment Capital to your Community



Fundamentals of Economic Development

General Overview

- Best Practices - Development Process:
 - Land Use Regulations up to date
 - Efficient and timely application processes
 - Minimum number of commissions and approvals (efficient and short approvals process)
 - Require initial & ongoing education for staff and commission members
 - Encourage predevelopment meetings between the developer, staff, and commission
 - Engage the community/neighborhoods
 - Fair and open process



Source: Don Poland Consulting

Fundamentals of Economic Development

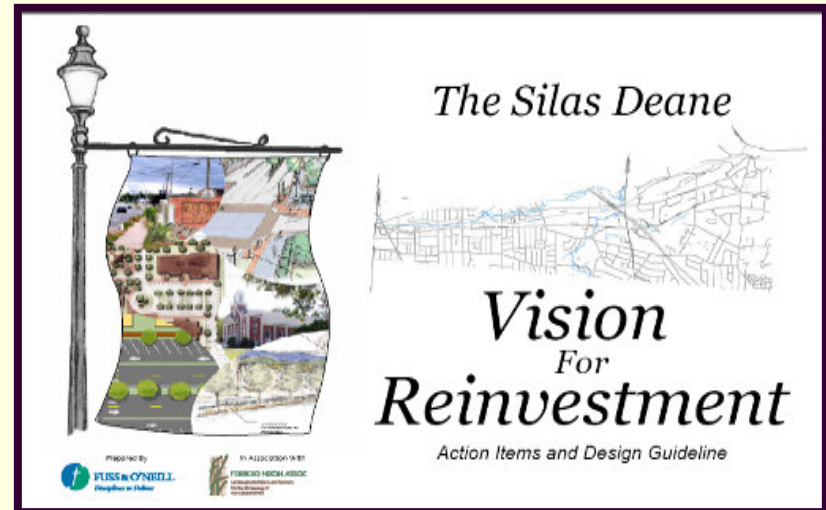
Creating Successful Economic Development

- Key Components:
 - Understand your competition
 - Other developments within your town
 - Developments in other towns/the region
 - Establish realistic targets and outcomes
 - What can our community and the market support?
 - Professional presentation package
 - Websites
 - Handouts
 - Portfolios
 - Developer Guides
 - Land Use Permitting Packages

Fundamentals of Economic Development

Creating Successful Economic Development

- Professional presentation package:
 - Demographic & traffic information
 - Inventory of available sites and spaces
 - Accurate, recent maps & pictures
 - Show flexibility on site layout, building design, signage
 - Want a specific project? - Say so!
 - Information must be accurate & complete – provide digital copy of everything
 - Back up opportunities with sound business logic



Fundamentals of Economic Development

Economic Development Challenges and Solutions

- Regulatory:
 - Permitting process
 - number of boards/commissions
 - time lines for boards/commissions
 - discretion of boards/commissions
 - Local legislation
 - Local process/requirements
 - Regional legislation
 - Regional process/requirements
 - State legislation
 - State process/requirements
 - Appeals process
 - Courts



Source: Jim Gibbons CBI Crash Course II PowerPoint

Fundamentals of Economic Development

Economic Development Challenges and Solutions

- Political/Public:
 - Comprehensive plans of development
 - Land use/master planning sessions
 - Joint sessions of boards & commissions
 - Interest group meetings
 - Town meetings
 - Project/market tours
 - Conferences: ICSC, ULI, NHBA
 - External economic development consultants
 - External planning consultants
 - Charrettes: www.charretteinstitute.org



Source: Jim Gibbons CBI Crash Course II PowerPoint

Fundamentals of Economic Development

Economic Development Challenges and Solutions

■ Communication

- Web sites: town & project sites
- Technical resources:
 - Tax maps, site/building inventories, aerials
- Community dialog:
 - Bringing together disparate interests:
 - Education supporters, seniors, environmentalists, anti-growth, parks & recreation, open-space, chambers of commerce
- Marketing materials: educational/informational

■ Attracting Development:

- Growth markets have “business-friendly” environments:
 - A favorable regulatory environment is attractive to investors – Swift, Simple, Certain
 - Create a regulatory environment that makes it easy for investors and business people to invest their money
- Tell your story

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Planning for Commercial Development

Part IV. Understanding The Land Use Approval Process

Understand the Land Use Approval Process

An Introduction

- What is the land use permitting and approval process?
 - A complex process of administering regulatory requirements to ensure that all developments comply with existing regulations and requirements.
 - The process is administered by many of government agencies, commissions, and staff.
 - The process can often be confusing and frustrating to applicants who may not have a good understanding of the purpose of the process and its requirements.
 - The Land Use process is often cumbersome and more complex than it needs to be.
 - This often stems from communities being overly cautious.
 - It also stems from communities fearing change and new development.

Understand the Land Use Approval Process

An Introduction

- The main reason for land use regulations is to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare.
 - Land use codes also function as tools that can aid a community in implementing its plan or vision for what the community wants to be.
 - Land use codes become a balance among market demands and private sector interests and the wants, desires and needs of a community, while protecting the public health, safety, and welfare.

- Communities must recognize that the land use system has a direct impact on economic development and investment in the community.
 - *Regulations impact market demands and create hurdles to development and investment.*
 - The land use permitting process adds time and money to the cost of development.
 - Land use regulations and the permitting process can impact the flow of investment into a community.

Understand the Land Use Approval Process

An Introduction

- How do we ensure that the regulatory and permitting process protects public health, safety, and welfare and encourages investment in our community?
- We start by understanding what investors and applicants expect from the land use approval process.
 - “*The Development Review Process: A Means to a Noble and Greater End*” by James van Hemert, AICP identifies a list of what applicants want:
 1. Predictability
 2. Fair Treatment
 3. Accurate and Accessible Information
 4. Timely Process
 5. Reasonable and Fair Costs
 6. Competent Staff
 7. Elegant Regulations

Understanding the Land Use Approval Process

The Development Review Process

- What Applicants Want:
 - **1. Predictability**
 - Clear expectations, no surprises
 - Clear process and decision points
 - **2. Fair Treatment**
 - Rules are the same for everyone
 - No “good” or “bad” developers—offer trust and be trustworthy
 - **3. Accurate and Accessible Information**
 - Easy to find and understand
 - Clear application requirements and standards
 - **4. Timely Process**
 - Establish early tentative dates for hearings
 - Guaranteed review turn-around times
 - Published commission and council meeting dates

Understanding the Land Use Approval Process

The Development Review Process

- What Applicants Want:
 - **5. Reasonable and Fair Costs**
 - Application fees
 - Development commitments
 - Impact fees
 - **6. Competent Staff**
 - Staff team should have a balance of “hard” technical skills and “soft” people skills
 - **7. Elegant Regulations**
 - That fit
 - That are easy to navigate
 - That are rational
 - The most desired outcomes are easy to meet

Understanding the Land Use Approval Process

Creating and Effective Approval Process

- **Comprehensive Planning:** An effective land use approval process begins with good planning.
 - Regularly update the local Plan of Conservation and Development
 - Create a vision for the community
 - What does your community wants to be when it grows up?
 - Identify the desired outcomes for development
 - Develop policies and strategies to achieve the desired outcomes
 - Implement the plan through updating your land use regulations
 - Revise and update as needed

Understanding the Land Use Approval Process

Creating and Effective Approval Process

- **Land Use Regulation:** Update land use regulations (zoning, subdivision, and wetlands) to work within the local context—community needs, desired outcomes, and market realities.
 - Regulations should reflect the visions and outcomes of the Plan
 - Regulations must fit the needs and wants of the community
 - The regulations should be user friendly and easy to navigate
 - Meaningful layout
 - Tables, charts, diagrams
 - Avoid technical jargon
 - Regulations should encourage what the community wants
 - Allow most desired development and uses as-of-right (site plan)
 - Limit the use of special permits and exceptions
 - Allow for staff administrative approvals
 - Don't allow what you don't want

Understanding the Land Use Approval Process

Creating and Effective Approval Process

- **Accurate and Accessible Information:** Make sure all documents are up-to-date and easily accessible.
 - All plans, regulations, applications, and other documents should be available online and in town hall
 - Develop clear and detailed instructions for all applications and permits - check lists are very helpful
 - Provide application timelines and flowcharts for each application process
 - Consider a Developers perspective of the land use approval process when developing all of the above information
 - If you have specific expectations related to architectural and site design, create and provide Design Guidelines

Understanding the Land Use Approval Process

Creating and Effective Approval Process

- **Customer Service Oriented Process and Staff:** The aim of the process should be create investment in the community and to HELP developers get their projects approved.
 - Assist applicants with questions, process, and procedures
 - Work with applicants to ensure the highest quality of applications and development
 - Complete, comply, and compatible
 - Customer service (public service) is the responsibility of all staff.
 - Implement regular training and continuing for all staff and commission members
 - The goal should be to approve applications for development. Not to deny them.
 - Fees: Should be realistic, reasonable, and fair.
 - For large applications provide a copy of plans, regulations, standards, and design guidelines free of charge

Understanding the Land Use Approval Process

Creating and Effective Approval Process

- **Predictable and Certain:** Make sure the process is predictable and certain for applicants
 - Be honest, upfront, and direct about expectations and wants
 - Avoid public hearings when not required by law
 - Consider joint commission meetings and hearings for large and complex applications
 - Ensure regulations, requirements, considerations, and criteria for decisions are within the context of the law
 - Example: Don't require site plans or concept plans for a zone change
 - Avoid discretionary considerations for as-of-right approvals
 - Example: Site plan requirements that development must be consistent with community character
 - Utilize pre-application meetings with the commission

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Planning for Commercial Development

Part V. Positioning Communities for Economic Development

Positioning and Repositioning Communities

Community and Economic Development

- How we intentionally reposition neighborhoods (communities) to grow demand:
 1. Read neighborhood (community) to determine what's working and what's not working in terms of people's decisions to invest, or not, and why?
 2. Set outcomes and measures for outcomes
 3. Chose the tactics that will best achieve these outcomes
 4. Assess and strengthen capacity to deliver reinvestment strategy
 5. Implement
 6. Measure progress toward outcomes, NOT ACTIVITIES
 7. Develop new approaches when old ones are obsolete based on changes in the market

Positioning and Repositioning Communities

Community and Economic Development

- How we intentionally add supply where there is a surplus of demand:
 1. Locate supply-demand imbalance for population/location being addressed
 2. Determine with geographic specificity the nature of the imbalance
 3. Scale the intervention to respond to the problem
 4. Intervene so as to maintain market confidence at root of supply shortage
 5. Develop for the long run by incorporating adequate reserves and integrating asset management

Positioning and Repositioning Communities

Community and Economic Development

- How we intentionally rebuild retail in a weak-market neighborhoods and centers:
 1. Identify and define the immediate trade area
 2. Determine the nature of leakage or overage
 3. Examine the surrounding neighborhoods/areas to determine their demographic composition
 4. Begin addressing IMAGE, MARKET, PHYSICAL CONDITION, and NEIGHBORHOOD SELF MANAGEMENT in the surrounding neighborhoods/areas as the major means of changing the trade area
 5. Decide what the new target market is
 6. Remix retail appropriately

Positioning and Repositioning Communities

Community Investment

- Essential Considerations for Investment Strategies:
 - **Choice:** Understanding that people and businesses make choices as to where to invest, what to invest in, when to invest, and how much to invest.
 - **Competition:** From other communities, areas, locations, and properties. It is not enough for a community to be a good place to live, work and play; the community must be able to attract residents and businesses even as its competitors change every year.
 - **Confidence:** Older communities are often a confusing mixture of perceptions and behavior. Residents and businesses want confidence affirmed from others investing in their properties and community.
 - **Predictability in Community:** Residents and businesses want predictability. New neighbors and businesses are considered good when they notice and abide by the prevailing norms.

Positioning and Repositioning Communities

Key Elements of Change

- The work of community/economic development must focus on:
 - **Image:** A Positive Image that attracts investment – from businesses, residents, and government
 - **Market:** Real Estate Market will reflect confidence. The community or neighborhood or strip or center will make sense to key investors because property values (including rents) are rising. Will help investors (businesses and residents) who want to stay, invest, and benefit from reinvestment
 - **Physical Conditions:** Public/Private buildings and spaces will reflect pride of ownership, pride of community, and high standards of maintenance. Public infrastructure will be maintained and improved to similar standards of locations viewed as better
 - **Neighborhood (Community) Self Management:** Investors (businesses and residents) will have the capacity to manage the day-to-day activities on their blocks. Investors are comfortable being “neighborly” look out for each other, work together on problems, take action to reinforce positive standards and actions.

Reading the Neighborhood (Community)

Image

What's Working?

- What are the assets?
- Is there a theme?
- Positive properties?

Outcome's

- Improved Perception
- Social and physical norms communicate pride
- Decrease in poor or blighted conditions
- Improve the quality of property/businesses on display

What's NOT Working?

- Perceptions?
- Misinformation?
- Negative properties?

Strategies

- Market positives – newsletter, press releases, street banners, signage, website...
- Improve standards for property maintenance through projects – facade improvements
- Provide resources and encouragement improvements to reduce negative conditions

Reading the Neighborhood (Community)

Market

What's Working?

- Commercial properties?
- Sales and rent values?
- Location?
- Access to market?

Outcome's

- Increase demand (market)
- Reduce supply (vacancies)
- Improve access (parking, transit)
- DT counts?
- Unique experience
- Employment?

What's NOT Working?

- Over supply?
- Lack of investment?
- Poor property maintenance?
- Stagnant or declining values?
- Lack of Demand?
- Competition?

Strategies

- Resist adding supply (new construction) if vacancies are high
- Target niche markets
- Convert vacant land to well designed parking
- Reduce fees for parking

Reading the Neighborhood (Community)

Physical Conditions

What's Working?

- Public building well maintained?
- Historic or New England Character?
- Public infrastructure?
- Property maintenance?
- Ample and well situated parking?

Outcome's

- Façade improvements and rehab of existing properties-repair will be of high quality
- Public infrastructure will be well maintained-high quality
- Blighted properties will be secure, rehabbed, or demolished

What's NOT Working?

- Deteriorating conditions?
- Decaying infrastructure?
- Property maintenance?
- Lack of or poor located parking?

Strategies

- Provide low interests or no interest loans for facade and rehab programs
- Use CDBG or other funds to improve streets, sidewalks, and public buildings
- Implement code enforcement program to ensure public safety, not to coerce investment

Reading the Neighborhood (Community)

Neighborhood (Community) Self Management

What's Working?

- Civic engagement?
- Business relationships?
- Community and business organizations?
- Civic leaders?

Outcome's

- More businesses will be involved in the community
- Crime or perception of crime will decrease
- Streets and sidewalks will be litter free

What's NOT Working?

- Business owners don't know each other?
- Lack of confidence?
- Negative norms?
- No sense of community?

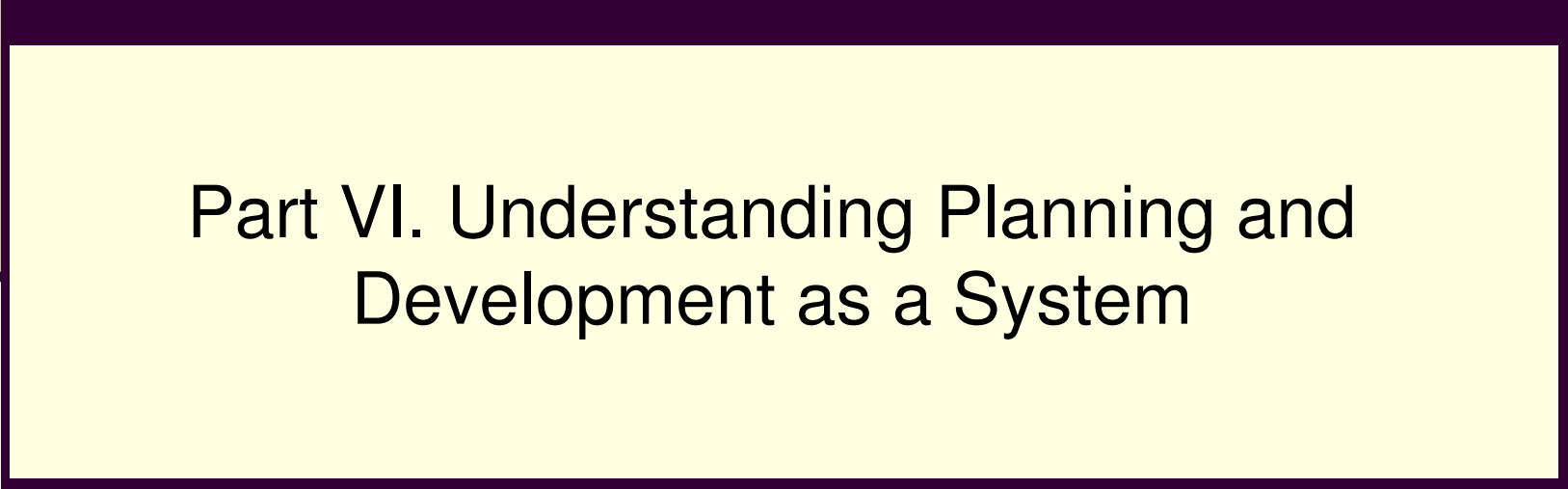
Strategies

- Organize business association or Main Street program
- Businesses will keep eyes on the street – spend time outside, watch neighbors properties
- Install trash bins, organize clean ups, businesses will sweep sidewalk and street



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Part VI. Understanding Planning and Development as a System

Understand Planning and Development as a System

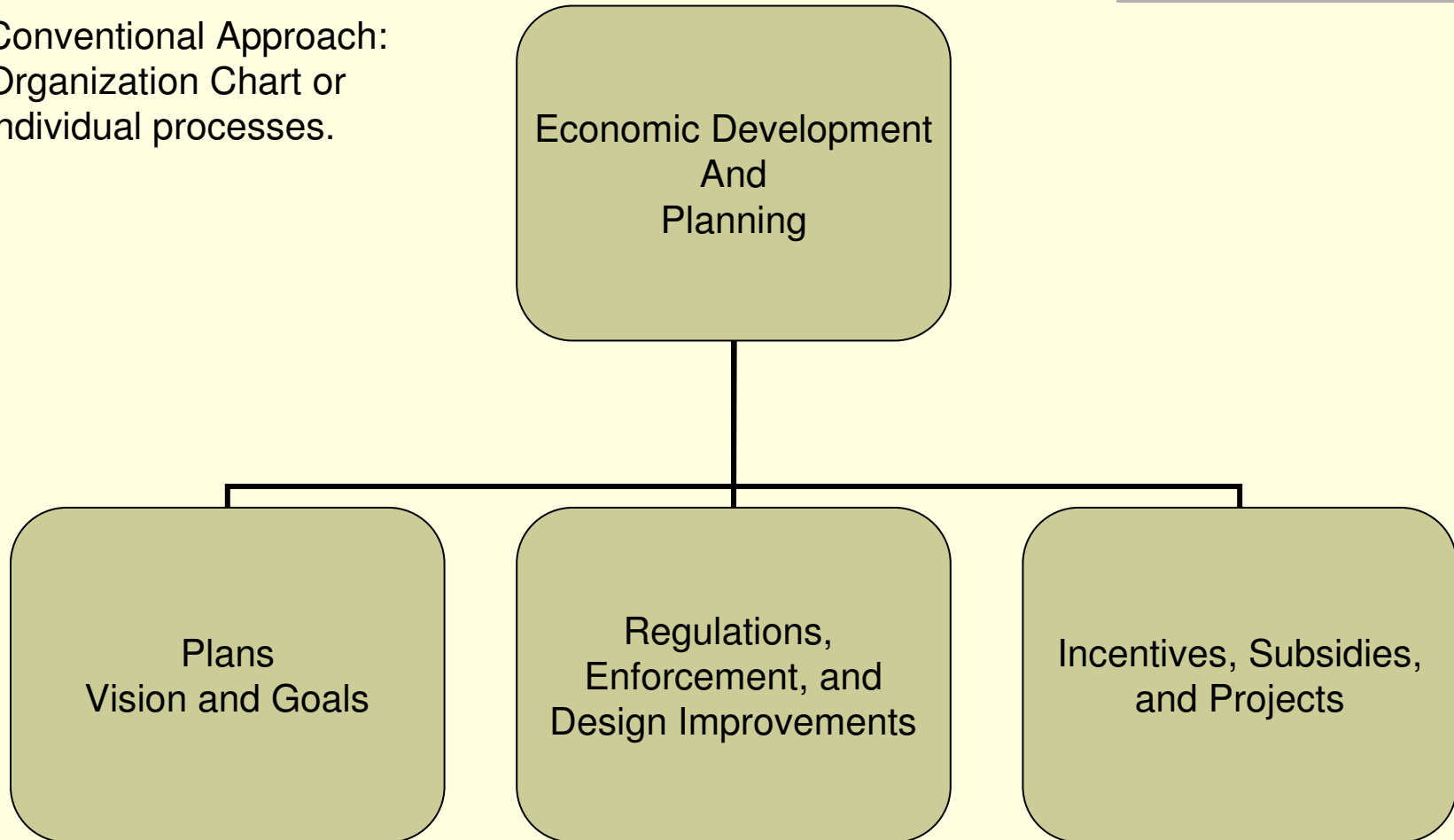
Appreciation for a system – W. Edward Deming

- **What is a system?** “A system is a network of independent components that work together to try to accomplish the aim of the system.”
- “A system must have an aim. The aim of the system must be clear to everyone in the system. The aim must include plans for the future. The aim is a value judgment.”
- “A system must be managed.” “It is important that an aim never be defined in terms of a specific activity.”
 - **Real Estate Development, Economic Development, Community Development, Planning, and Land Use all are Part of a Larger System:** We often fail to recognize all of these process are part of a complex system that includes many components, factors, and participants.
 - We must recognize the development process as system if we want to improve it.

Understand Planning and Development as a System

Appreciation for a system – W. Edward Deming

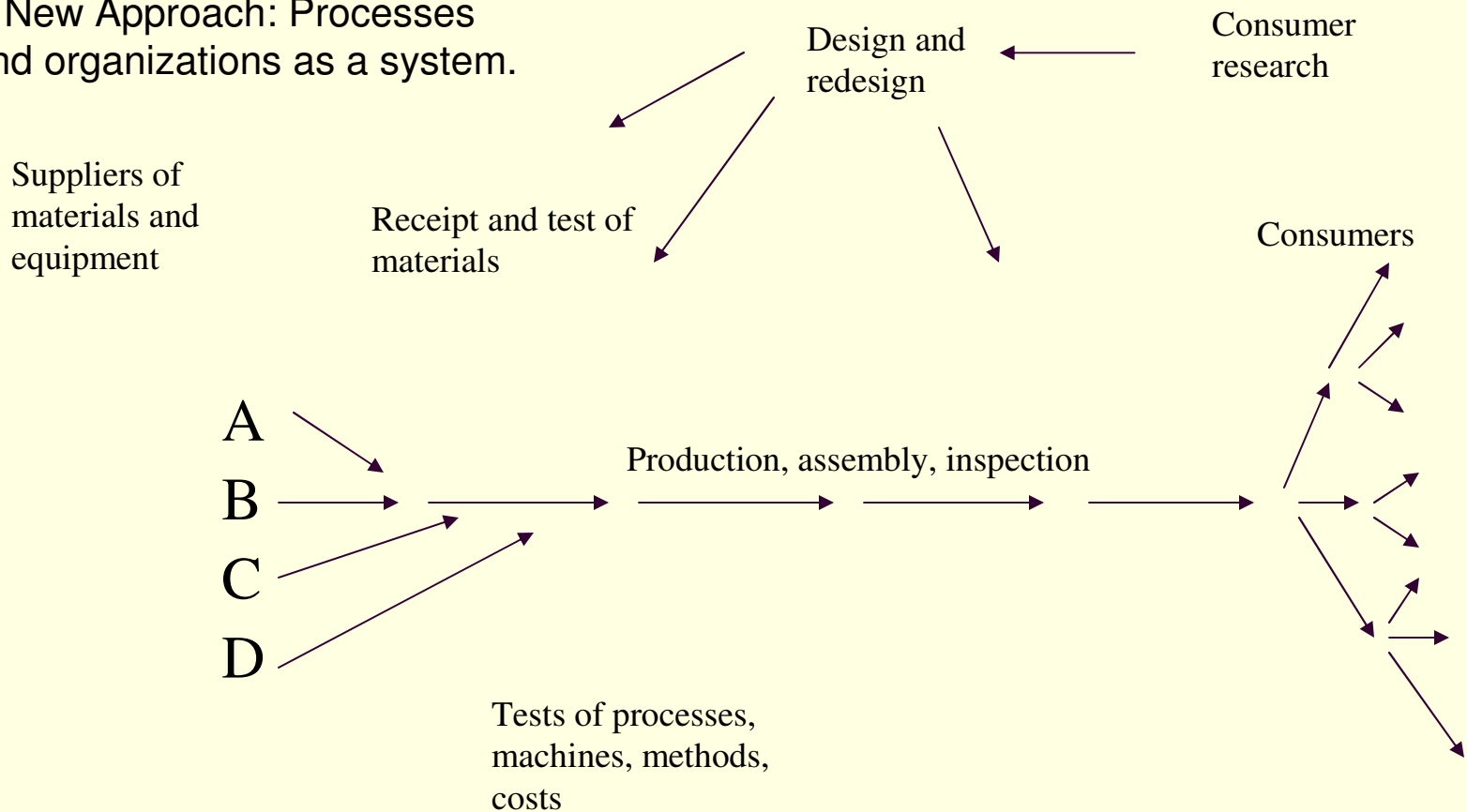
Conventional Approach:
Organization Chart or
individual processes.



Understand Planning and Development as a System

Deming Flow Diagram of a System—Not an Organizational Chart

A New Approach: Processes and organizations as a system.



Source: Deming, "The New Economics"

Understand Planning and Development as a System

The Planning and Development System as a Flow Diagram

A continual system of improvement.

Stakeholders: The participants in the system: developers, bankers, builders, planners, residents, business owners, etc.

Implementation: resources, cost, time, staff, regulations, etc.

Methods: best practices, regulations, strategies, etc.

Community Assessment: Market research, demographics, and data analysis

Goals and Outcomes

Choice
Competition
Confidence
Predictability

Image – Market

Physical Conditions - Management

Continual Evaluation: of processes, strategies, methods, outcomes, etc. The PDSA Cycle of Learning.

Consumers
Residents
Jobs
Community
Quality of Life
Wealth
Taxes
Character

Understanding Land Use Administration as a System

Land Use Administration as a Flow Diagram

A continual system of improvement.

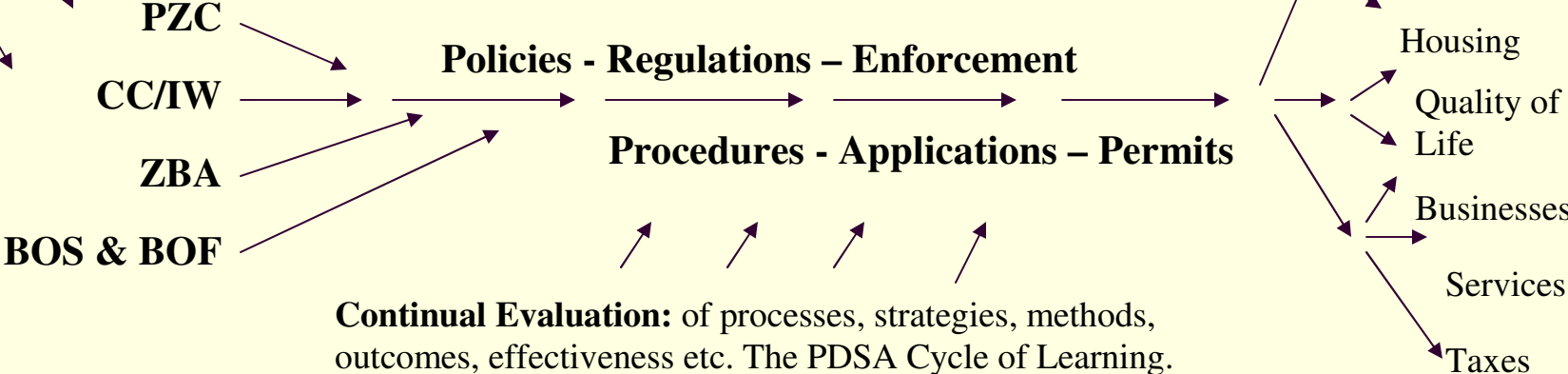
Stakeholders: Land use commissions, residents, developers, builders, businesses, town staff, property rights, etc.

Methods: Plans, best practices, strategies, legal requirements, etc.

Vision: What we want our community to be?

Implementation: resources, investment and cost, time and effort, staff, etc.

A Balance of Goals and Outcomes



Crash Course II

Planning for Commercial Development

Part VII. A Perspective on Sustainability and Smart Growth

Sustainability and Smart Growth

Sustainable Development

- Sustainable development is one of those phrases that is used so often that it has come to mean many things to many people.
- The most cited definition of sustainable development was created by the United Nations Brundtland Commission report “Our Common Future” 1987. The definition states:
- "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."
 - the concept of 'needs,' in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
 - the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.
- This definition provides a global and broad framework of looking toward the future in context of our actions today.

Sustainability and Smart Growth

Sustainable Development

- If we (state or towns) are to succeed in economic development—compete for investment, jobs, and taxes—that we must encourage and promote development
 - Development and growth do not have to be four letter words
- We must realize that development—growth and change—will occur. That also means that urban expansion (sprawl) will occur
 - Outward expansion is naturally occurring phenomenon in a free market economy where 90 percent of land is in private ownership
- The outcome should not be to slow growth, fight development, prevent change, or to stop sprawl.
 - These efforts distract us from developing meaningful strategies for growth
- Our outcome should be to encourage and manage growth—to grow more responsibly or more sustainable
 - This does not have to limit choice or favor one type of development or community over another

Sustainability and Smart Growth

A Balanced Growth Strategy for Connecticut

- If we are to strike a balance between development and conservation we need to approach the discussion around responsible growth from a realistic perspective.
- Connecticut (towns) must embrace growth and development if we are to maintain and enhance our economic prosperity.
- If we are to grow, then we must understand that we cannot and will not conserve and preserve all undeveloped land.
- In addition, we must realize that our cities and core areas could never accommodate all future growth.
- If we are to implement Smart (Responsible) Growth policies and strategies in Connecticut, then we need to make sure that the Smart Growth policies are scaled to fit the location and community where they are being implemented.

Sustainability and Smart Growth

A Core Area (Urban and Suburban) Strategy

■ **Reduce barriers to investment:**

- Reduce development fees (permit fees and inspection fees)
- Encourage pre-approved shovel ready sites
- Require as-of-right approval for land use decisions
- Reduce strict historic preservation, building, fire, and health codes that don't apply well to older buildings, and lengthy permitting processes

■ **Invest in housing and neighborhoods:**

- Restructure housing programs to target investment and focus the outcomes on improving the housing stock, encouraging property maintenance, adding amenities, and improving the overall neighborhood.
- Reduce focus on providing homes for low and moderate income households and serve a wider range of income levels.

■ **Invest in building the working class:**

- Stop the clustering of low income households into weak and distressed areas.
- If the goal is to improve core areas then we need to build upon the strengths of the working and middle-class and retain and attract these households.
- Government programs that target low and moderate households should be expanded to include households earning up to 120 percent of median household income.

Sustainability and Smart Growth

A Suburban Strategy

- **Encourage higher density commercial and residential development:**
 - Promote policies that encourage greater density in these areas.
 - The more development that can be accommodated in suburban (and core) areas, the less development pressure that will be placed on rural areas.
 - Encourage “responsible growth strategies” such as transit oriented development, mixed use and mixed income development, and affordable housing.
- **Invest in infrastructure:**
 - These areas are best suited for growth and we should invest in infrastructure in these communities to support and encourage more growth.
- **Encourage planning for growth and improved land use approval processes:**
 - Encourage as-of-right land use approvals and remove discretion from as-of-right approvals.
 - Local Plans of Conservation and Development should encourage growth and higher density growth...Zoning Regulations should reflect this.
- **Conservation in suburban areas:**
 - Conservation should target active recreation (i.e. the creation of parks and trail systems) since active recreation facilities and parks will enhance the built environment and enhance the quality of life in these areas.

Sustainability and Smart Growth

A Rural Conservation Strategy

- **Target conservation efforts in rural areas:**
 - Policies and resources should encourage conservation of farmland, open space, and critical habitat in small towns and rural areas.
 - The State should develop a strategic conservation plan to protect our most valuable rural lands and focus programs in these areas.
- **Small town economic development:**
 - State policies should provide economic development assistance to small towns.
 - Small towns/centers are a vital part of our economy and character.
- **Infrastructure investment:**
 - Investments in infrastructure should be targeted into town centers and adjacent areas to support higher density development in and near the centers.
- **Conservation subdivision:**
 - Rural and small towns should encouraged conservation subdivision regulations that allow for higher density development to reduce land consumption and preserve open space.
 - The state should encourage and promote the use of Alternative Treatment Systems for waste water disposal to accommodate higher density developments in town and village centers.

Sustainability and Smart Growth

A Rural Conservation Strategy

■ **Support agriculture:**

- Policies and strategies should support agricultural activities in rural areas, on prime agricultural soils, and where agriculture is economically feasible.
- Policies should also support, encourage, and aid in making agriculture economically feasible.
- However, we must be realistic in this approach and recognize that we are not an agrarian society and will never return to the agricultural economy of the 1700's and 1800's.

■ **Rural development:**

- While seeking to implement these conservation policies, it is important to recognize that rural areas also need to develop to serve the needs of rural populations.
- Therefore, conservation and preservation programs should be targeted toward critical habitats and agricultural resources but not used to prohibit or limit development.

Sustainability and Smart Growth

A Preservation Strategy

■ **Historic preservation:**

- Preservation policies and strategies should target economically feasible historic structures in urban, suburban, and rural areas.
- The economic feasibility of redeveloping or preserving historic buildings is often undermined by excessive code compliance cost.
- The state and towns must encourage flexible building and health and safety codes and flexible land use regulations to make preservation less costly.

■ **Cultural preservation:**

- Cultural assets should be preserved and supported. These sites provide opportunities for tourism, education, and recreation.

■ **Natural areas and assets:**

- Policies at the state and local level should focus preservation and conservation efforts on our most critical natural assets. These are State Parks, prime agricultural soil, critical habitat, endangered species, and scenic areas.

■ **Preservation planning:**

- The state and towns should conduct inventory of all of our historic, cultural, and natural resources and assets and develop plans for protecting and preserving such assets.
- The process should prioritize assets based on their significance and value.
- Preservation planning, strategies, and programs should not be viewed as a means to prevent growth and development, but to enhance our quality of life.

Sustainability and Smart Growth

A Integrated Planning Strategy

■ **State Plan of Conservation and Development:**

- The state plan should provide a vision for Connecticut and the general policies to implement that vision and to help guide state agencies, regional planning organizations, and local planning commissions.
- We must recognize that the state plan a vision and general guide for planning policies and that regional and local plans are created on a more detailed scale and are better suited to implement specific planning policies.

■ **Regional Plans of Conservation and Development:**

- The regional plans should consider and utilize the same Growth Management principles as the state plan.
- This will provide an integration of state and regional planning policies and eliminate the need for consistency between plans that are created and intended for implementation at different scales.

■ **Municipal Plans of Conservation and Development:**

- Local plans should and do consider the State Growth Management principles.
- This is an effective policy that ensures the integration of planning policies at both the state and local level.
- We must recognize that the local planning commissions are the most qualified to make planning and policy decisions.
- The most comprehensive and detailed plans are the local plans and therefore the be level to implement policy.

Sustainability and Smart Growth

A Integrated Planning Strategy

- **Municipal Land Use Regulations and Municipal Plans:**
 - Municipal land use regulations are effective tools to implement many, but not all, aspects of the policies recommended within the local plan of conservation and development. I
 - We must recognize that planning is the prediction of future outcomes with the risk of being wrong. This risk of be wrong is caused by changing circumstances, conditions, and the wants and needs of the community over time.
 - If this were not the case we would need to plan only once and never again.
 - Therefore, both plans and regulations need to be flexible and fluid to adjust to change.
 - It is for this reason that strict consistency between local land use regulations and plans of conservation should not be required.

Community Builders Institute

Crash Course II

Planning for Commercial Development

Presented By:

Donald J. Poland, MS, AICP

Don Poland Consulting

E-mail: don@donaldpoland.com

Web: www.donaldpoland.com

Phone: 860.655.6897

Donald J. Poland, MS. AICP

Professional Experience

- Past President – CT Chapter of the American Planning Association.
 - previously President Elect, Vice President, and Government Relations Chair.
- Over 16 years experience
 - Planning, land use, and zoning
 - Neighborhood reinvestment
 - Project management
 - six years public sector experience
 - four years non-profit sector experience
 - five years private sector consulting experience
- Nationally recognized consulting practice
 - Projects in UT, PA, LA, MD, NH, RI, and CT
 - One of a handful of consultants working on Post-Katrina redevelopment strategies in the New Orleans Region
- Public Speaking and Training
 - Presented at over 85 conferences and seminars
 - Topics include zoning regulations, zoning enforcement, smart growth, neighborhood reinvestment, economic development, commercial development, and others
- Adjunct lecturer at CCSU, MCC, and UCONN
 - Intro to Planning, Intro to Geography, Community/Regional Planning, and Urban Geography
- Earning a PhD in urban geography at University College London