



Towards Balanced Growth

Solutions for a better tomorrow





The Triangle

is a great place to live, work and raise a family. As our region continues to expand, how we manage growth is fundamental to the Triangle's future economic success.

Citizens, businesses, and elected officials must work together to develop a balanced set of growth management solutions to address our region's most pressing challenges.

But as citizens demand more parks, open space, good roads—while keeping taxes low—local governments must do more with less. Striking an appropriate balance between community needs, the environment, and the rights and interests of property owners will require a creative mix of public and private solutions.

We believe the private sector and citizens must provide leadership in the formation of positive, creative solutions to manage growth.

Triangle Community Coalition is dedicated to creating, developing, and implementing balanced solutions to our region's growth issues.

Towards Balanced Growth: Solutions for a Better Tomorrow

aims to educate citizens, opinion leaders, and elected leaders on a series of such solutions which will, we believe, help maintain the Triangle's high quality of life, its economic success, and protect the region's natural environment.

This document lists five key policy principles, along with a corresponding set of solutions including:

- 1) Mixed Use Development*
- 2) Open Space*
- 3) Transit Oriented Development*
- 4) The Development Approval Process*
- 5) Investing in Infrastructure*

Our list of principles and suggested solutions is a starting point. It represents a focal point for elected officials, citizens, and the business community as we address growth related issues and challenges. We hope this primer will stimulate a continuous discussion about how we approach and regulate growth.

By working together, we believe citizens, businesses, elected officials, organizations, and individuals can find common ground towards balanced growth for a stronger, better tomorrow.

1. Promote Mixed Use Development

Combining residences, offices and shopping (“mixed use” development) will create more vibrant areas, produce walkable communities, and enhance our area’s overall economy. Local governments, planners and policy makers should make this type of development a priority.

Solution: Adopt Easy to Use Codes and Ordinances

“Overlay zones—requirements on top of underlying zoning—for mixed use development should be adopted by local governments, where appropriate. Mixed use zoning districts and planned development districts, which allow the mixing of land uses “by right” will also help encourage this type of development.

Solution: Educate the Public about Mixed Use Development

Local governments should do more, through the planning process, to educate residents about the virtues of mixed use development. This would help avoid the “Not in My Back Yard” (NIMBY) syndrome prevalent with mixing land uses.



2. Preserve, Protect and Promote More Open Space

Open space is vital to maintaining the Triangle's quality of life. For years the development community, the business community, and local governments have partnered to strike an appropriate balance between providing sufficient open space and the development needs of a growing community.

But more must be done. By providing additional open space, we will improve our region's environment, enhance our water quality, and improve our over-all economic well-being. Therefore, how we plan for and purchase open space is critical.

Solution: Purchase Open Space Using Broad-Based Innovative Measures

Private land trusts, special open space funds, user fees, bonds, special local sales taxes and tax credits should be explored, and adopted, to facilitate the purchase of open space.

Solution: Adopt Innovative, Incentive-Based Zoning & Development Techniques

Local governments should adopt incentives which allow developers more density in exchange for additional open space. Examples of such techniques include, but are not limited to, *cluster, conservation and open space development ordinances*.





3. Plan for & Promote High Density Development Around Transit Stations

High density development, in appropriate locations, can enhance our region's transportation system. For that reason, high density development around the Triangle Transit Authority's proposed regional rail stations should be a priority for local governments.

Citizen support for higher density development around planned transit stations is vital to the future success of our regional rail system. In a recent study by the TCC, approximately 70% of people surveyed approve of higher density around transit stops. This is significant news as planners and elected officials move forward with the construction of the regional rail system, and plan for eventual supporting development.

Solution: Plan for and "Pre- Zone" Higher Densities Around Stations:

According to the Local Government Commission, in its recent publication, *Creating Great Neighborhoods*, "Density next to a transit station helps improve transit services for more people. As more people live closer to the station, the system will likely be used more and can economically support more frequent service."

Solution: Rewrite Zoning Laws to Allow "Transit Oriented Development" by Right:

If transit oriented development is to be successful, local governments should amend—or create—zoning laws that make transit oriented development attractive, predictable and easy for the development community to implement.

In a recent study by the TCC, approximately 70% of people surveyed approve of higher density around transit stops



4. **Make Development Decisions Cost Effective, Predictable & Reasonable**

The type, intensity, and quality of development is determined primarily by regulations imposed on the development community. If our area is to experience planned, “smart growth” development demanded by policy makers and citizens groups, local governments must do more to make the development process reasonable, fair and cost effective.

Therefore, keeping development costs to a minimum will only benefit businesses and consumers by lowering rents, housing costs and by keeping the cost of doing business to a minimum. Policy makers must keep this in mind when imposing new regulations on development.

Surprisingly, most people understand that additional regulations ultimately impact their wallets. TCC’s survey research underscores this important fact. When asked about the increased costs of living created by additional regulatory burdens on development, 53% of respondents we surveyed are only willing to accept a small increase—less than 5%—to apartment rents and housing costs.

Solution: Streamline the Approval Process for all Types of Development:

Local governments should evaluate their respective development approval rules and regulations, and to the extent possible, remove costly barriers to the permitting process which ultimately drive up the cost of development.

Solution: Create and Implement a Process To Expedite Certain Types of Development:

Local governments should consider a “green light” approval system which speeds up the process for certain types of developments, e.g. planned unit developments, infill/redevelopment, master planned/compact communities and mixed use development.

Removing excessive regulatory barriers to development and making decisions predictable and cost effective will foster the type of development demanded by the community, keeping housing and the cost of doing business to a minimum.



5. Maintain and Promote Adequate Infrastructure

As citizens demand more value for their tax dollars, local governments are pressed to find creative ways to pay for schools, roads and other infrastructure. In some cases, local officials will adopt stringent growth management measures such as permit caps, high impact fees and growth boundaries as a way to deal with infrastructure demand. But this “punitive” approach to dealing with growth and infrastructure needs is detrimental to economic development—and ultimately causes more sprawl, not less. In order to meet our region’s growing infrastructure demands, our leaders must be willing to think outside the box and adopt creative measures. We suggest the following solutions as a starting point:

Solution: Invest More Tax Dollars Back Into Infrastructure:

Local governments should perform an annual “infrastructure audit” and share with the community how much they invest back into fundamental infrastructure like water and sewer, roads, schools, and parks. Before local governments seek additional revenue—which impacts businesses and consumers—they must first invest adequate tax dollars into fundamental infrastructure.

Solution: Explore Creative Ways to Pay for Infrastructure:

In today’s world of financing, local governments have more options than ever to finance infrastructure. Therefore, local governments should explore alternative ways to pay for infrastructure. Depending on legislative and legal authority, local governments might consider, among others, the following methods¹:

- Self Financing Bonds
- Design-Build Strategies
- Alternative School Designs (combined use facilities)
- Public/Private Partnerships
- Community-based Alternative Waster Water Treatment Facilities
- Privatization
- Tax Credits/Tax Incentives



Local governments should perform an annual “infrastructure audit” and share with the community how much they invest back into fundamental infrastructure



¹ To learn more about these methods, see “Building for Tomorrow: Innovative Infrastructure Solutions” at www.tricc.org/docs/paygrow.pdf



In a recent survey of Wake County residents, six out of ten respondents expressed support for purchasing more open space—even if it affected their own personal property. Clearly, local governments must find creative ways to provide, and pay for, additional open space programs.



For additional information on these issues, please visit our website.

www.tricc.org



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