



INTEGRATING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES INTO EVERYDAY PLANNING

Presented by Corrin Wendell

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12:00 – 1:00 PM

Webinar Summary: Economic development is a valuable component in setting the course for how your community will grow and thrive. Learn about a variety of economic development policies and tools that can be integrated into your community's comprehensive plan including identification of opportunity sites for development and redevelopment, workforce housing plans, the development of a high performing zoning code, business retention and expansion programs, and many others. This webinar will explore the connections among these tools and the value of creatively integrating these strategies into everyday planning practice that will ultimately benefit your community's economic growth and prosperity.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

- 1. You talked an economic development chapter and economic development element, and integrating economic development across chapters, do you have suggestions for best practices and how to include this element without having a separate, non-required, chapter or how to call out those items so they are evident within each chapter?**

There are many ways that you can incorporate economic development strategies, tools, and policies across the entire comprehensive plan. That is something you are going to want to look at when you are developing your land use, or transportation – even when you're doing your parks and open space. You want to make sure that they are all tied together and maybe you call it out in a certain way where you highlight economic development. Maybe you call it something else but as long as you can see across all of those chapters you can see that they are all tied together. As we talked about, normal everyday planning items are really integrated into what we do as planners each and every day and you can do that within your comprehensive plans. There is a way to link all of those together so that it becomes evident that you are incorporating economic development strategies.

- 2. Any recommendations on how the cities can plan for the impact of demographic changes on economic development and still be resilient? Such as shrinking workforce, technology, and aging population.**

When you are in the midst of your comprehensive plan update it's really important to have that initial framework and foundation set. So, whether that's through the update of your demographic (we have great forecasters here at the Met Council who provide that information for you), you can then look at how that strategically rolls into what you want to do for land use, in terms of your future planning for your downtown for example, or your business districts. You want to make sure that all those elements tie back to that foundation. You may want to consider a market analysis that may also fill in some of those gaps that you don't necessarily see. I always believe the more information you have, the better. That can really boil down into those policies and strategies into your comprehensive plan. That's always helpful to get that whole picture.

- 3. Can I attach an economic development strategic plan to my comprehensive plan?**

If you are considering completing an Economic Development Strategic Plan after the adoption of your Comprehensive Plan, you can submit a Comprehensive Plan amendment at that time to include the strategic plan.

4. Do I need to have a designated economic development district in my community?

A city does not have to have a designated economic development district in order to integrate economic development strategies into their Comprehensive Plan or everyday planning. Economic Development Districts, such as a Manufacturing District or Creative Economy District, can be discussed as a land use and economic development strategy if it would make sense to include them into your land use map and zoning ordinance.

5. How does community engagement fit into the economic development element planning process?

Community Engagement plays a large role in how to you plan for the economic development element with your Comprehensive Plan. From the beginning of the process to the end and beyond, community engagement is a way to bring together the vision of your community. Through the development of the economic development element of the comprehensive plan, you want to stay engaged with your residents, business owners, other stakeholders, working groups, and commissions. You may want to host workshops, focus groups, surveys, and public meetings within the community. Other stakeholders that you may want to reach out to include: tourists, brokers, lenders, developers, and public institutions.

6. You mentioned tax breaks and incentives being outdated practices, but then brought up TIF as a possible tool. What is the difference?

Within the outdated methods for economic development; tax breaks, subsidies, location incentives, and favorable tax rates were listed to convey that a community cannot rely only on these methods for bringing in new businesses. Communities need to diversify in how they attract businesses and not fall into offering incentives that prove to be too high of a cost for a city. Both corporate leaders and entrepreneurs ranked these incentives lower on the list for what attracts them to a community, higher on the list is a great quality of life, walkable locations, and proximity to live/work/play neighborhoods. Later in the presentation, TIF, or Tax Increment Financing, was brought up as one of the tools for communities to use as part of a larger toolbox of a variety of financial tools, funding sources and grant funding that can be used to attract new businesses.

7. I understand that needing a talented pool of potential employees is critical for businesses, but is that really economic development? Another sector is responsible for that.

The availability of skilled labor and a talented pool of potential employees were ranked very high on a 2013 and 2014 survey of corporate leaders and entrepreneurs which tied directly to where these companies would like to be located. Investing companies want a great quality of life featuring walkable downtown locations, live/work/play neighborhoods and regional centers with nearby affordable housing for their employees, that include a vibrant mix of restaurants, cafes, shops, entertainment venues, and cultural attractions all within easy walking distance of offices. The Smart Growth America's 2015 report showed that hundreds of companies across the United States are moving to and investing in walkable downtown locations. This is happening in large part because these places help to attract and retain talented workers. Economic Development today is expanding to creating places where people want to be and where workers want to live – linking the two.

8. Could you explain a little more what the BRE, Business Retention and Expansion program is?

Retaining and expanding existing businesses is a surer economic development bet than recruiting new ones from other towns. Extension helps communities understand local business needs and respond – so that businesses stay, grow, and become more committed to the community. U of MN BR&E Strategies program gets the broader community involved in comprehensive business retention and expansion planning.

9. How does a market analysis inform a comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance?

What we have for a market analysis – we talked about that a few times and it really is looking like a really great way to support either your economic development chapter or your comprehensive plan as a whole. You want to understand the market opportunities by conducting that analysis and it is another tool that municipalities have in their tool box when it comes to planning and zoning. You want to encourage, whether it's your own community or others to incorporate that market analysis so you can make decisions from the comprehensive plan that then go into your zoning ordinance. So, you will want to have that information analysis when you are formulating your market analysis. We do have more information on our resource pages. We have an expert article from the Met Council that you can look into and there is also another news blast from another city that talks about market analysis and how they incorporated it into their comprehensive plan. You can look to those for more in depth information.

10. Given that TOD demands upzoning on Transit Hub areas which can potentially increase property values in surrounding neighborhoods. What can you suggest for addressing "Gentrification" issues?

Gentrification is not an issue exclusive to transit. However, it takes on special importance given that many low and moderate-income households rely on transit for transportation. Hennepin County sponsored the development of a Corridor Housing Strategy for the METRO Green Line Extension. This strategy identifies the full range of housing needs in the corridor, and the tools and approaches to maintain existing and develop new affordable housing. <http://www.swlrtcommunityworks.org/-/media/SW-Corridor/Document-Archive/housing/sw-corridor-housing-strategy-final-draft.pdf?la=en>

Please send additional questions or comments to corrin.hoegenwendell@metc.state.mn.us.