



*Helping Communities face the challenge and impacts of growth while maintaining community character and a sense of place.*

## FACT SHEET: 1

# Dealing with Growth

iTRaC is the Nashua Regional Planning Commission's new approach to community planning that focuses on integrating transportation, land use and environmental planning. The program was developed to assist communities in dealing with the challenges of growth in a coordinated way that sustains community character and a sense of place.

### Population and Growth Trends

The NRPC region is facing development pressure due in large part to its proximity to the Boston metropolitan area. The region has seen rapid population growth over the last 40 years. Between 1990 and 2000 the population has increased at an average annual rate of 1.3% adding approximately 2,400 new residents annually. Every community in the region has seen impacts to natural resources, open space and public services.

### Growth Gone Awry

Most communities welcome the type of growth that makes them vibrant, sustainable, livable places to reside and work, but strongly oppose cookie-cutter, one-size fits all development that erodes community character.

Undesirable attributes of haphazard or un-coordinated growth include:

- Dependence on the automobile for basic necessities and routine trips;
- Increased pollution and degradation of water quality due to runoff from impervious surfaces;
- Loss of open space for wildlife habitat and traditional agricultural uses;
- High rates of per capita land consumption;
- Homogenization of design resulting in loss of unique community character; and
- Traditional patterns of development suppressed or prohibited by land use regulations.

In order to harness the positive growth that leads to livable, distinctly unique New Hampshire communities, we need to examine underlying land use policies that result in sprawl, and revisit transportation processes that seem to sometimes be at odds with community vision.



### Shaping Growth in Your Community

Future development can be beneficial in enhancing community character and fostering a sense of place. Communities can choose to minimize the impacts of growth by taking a proactive approach to development. One way to do this is to examine land use regulations and policies to see if they are inadvertently permitting the inefficient, sprawling type of growth that is unwelcome, and to determine if there are ways that fit within the community's character and capabilities to encourage desired growth.

One of the strongest regulatory tools that New Hampshire Communities have to proactively shape growth is found in NH RSA 674:21, Innovative Land Use Controls. Innovative land use controls allow communities to develop ordinances that protect and enhance a community's character and environment.

The innovative land use controls may include (but are not limited to):

- Performance Standards
- Village Plan Alternative
- Intensity and Use Incentives
- Open Space / Conservation Subdivisions
- Environmental Characteristics Zoning



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## Dealing with Growth ~ continued

*The key is to ask how to use growth rather than how to stop it.*

—Why Smart Growth: A Primer, ICMA-Smart Growth Network

### Smart Growth Principles

#### NH Office of Energy and Planning

- **Maintain Traditional Compact Settlement Patterns** to efficiently use land, resources, and investments in infrastructure;
- **Foster the Traditional Character of New Hampshire** downtowns, villages, and neighborhoods by encouraging a human scale of development that is comfortable for pedestrians and conducive to community life;
- **Incorporate a Mix of Uses** to provide a variety of housing, employment, shopping, services, and social opportunities for all members of the community;
- **Preserve New Hampshire's Working Landscape** by sustaining farm and forest land and other rural resource lands to maintain contiguous tracts of open land and to minimize land use conflicts;
- **Provide Choices and Safety in Transportation** to create livable, walkable communities that increase accessibility for people of all ages, whether on foot, bicycle, or in motor vehicles;
- **Protect Environmental Quality** by minimizing impacts from human activities and planning for and maintaining natural areas that contribute to the health and quality of life in communities and people in New Hampshire;
- **Involve the Community** in planning and implementation to ensure that development retains and enhances the sense of place, traditions, goals, and values of the local community; and
- **Manage Growth Locally** in the New Hampshire tradition, but work with neighboring towns to achieve common goals and address common problems more effectively.

### Conventional Subdivision



### Subdivision after Applying Better Site Design



Source: "The Benefits of Better Site Design in Residential Subdivisions." *Watershed Protection Techniques*. 3(2): 633-646. Center for Watershed Protection.

### What Can My Community Do?

- Work with NRPC planners to conduct the Coordinated Planning Audit of land use regulations and development policies to see if there are ways to use growth to shape a positive future for your community.
- Contact Camille Pattison, iTRaC Program Manager to schedule the iTRaC introductory presentation at [camillep@nashuarpc.org](mailto:camillep@nashuarpc.org)

