

The Land Use element is unique in that it relates directly to each of the other elements by regulating the use of every parcel in the City. Further, land use tools will be used to achieve the goals of other elements. Therefore, the Land Use element is an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan that will have to consider the proceedings of each of the other Working Groups in its recommendations. To begin the dialogue, the working group discussed four general concepts in land use: sustainability, density, mixed-use, and growth versus contraction.

There are several ways that land use planning can improve sustainability and positively affect the lifestyles of Cincinnatians. Zoning regulations can encourage or mandate re-use of buildings as opposed to tearing down and building new. The Zoning Code could also regulate the environmental impact of buildings using, for example, specific Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design ratings, etc. One comment referenced health and justice issues as well, stating that no residential zones should abut a landfill. An interesting omission from the discussion of sustainability is the location of agriculture within and around the City, either in the form of community gardens or commercial farming. This is a current trend in planning and the Working Group may want to consider discussing this with the Health, Environment, and Open Space Working Group.

The issue of density is relevant to discussions of public transportation and critical mass. A certain density is required for public transportation to be viable. Density is also important to economic development issues and Neighborhood Business Districts. High density around neighborhood business districts means that more people can walk or bike to reach essential services. This makes Neighborhood Business Districts more attractive to businesses and residents. The Working Group acknowledged this point, but there were also a few comments warning about the downsides of density. For example, at a certain level of density, automobile traffic will be choked and public transit stops will be necessary to accommodate the density.

Density can be increased by an expansion of areas where mixed uses are permitted. The Working Group called for increasing these areas. Further discussion may be needed to clarify what exactly mixed-use means. One comment noted the distinction

between mixed-use buildings and mixed-use neighborhoods, while another Working Group member suggested that mixed-income should be included in the discussion. Also related to density, it may be appropriate to reduce parking requirements around mixed-use developments. A few comments spoke to the benefits of mixed land uses and suggested creating incentives for mixed-use developments.

The final land use concept that the Working Group discussed is the issue of future growth versus contraction. One Working Group member asked if the City should plan for contraction or react to it. This is of particular interest within Neighborhood Business Districts, which some members think have sprawled. The cost of providing services is lower if the population is more concentrated. Contraction also provides an opportunity for the City to land bank and build assets. Then there is the question of how to go about shrinking neighborhoods or business districts whether through targeted demolition, land banking, or some other method. The Working Group did not comment on methods of growth, but this issue will be discussed in future meetings.