



Planning Guidance Memo

To: Municipal Chief Elected Officials, Municipal Planning Contacts
From: R. I. STATEWIDE PLANNING PROGRAM
Date: June 22, 2004
Re: Designation of Growth Centers in the Local Comprehensive Plan

Introduction

This Guidance Memo provides local officials involved in the comprehensive planning, land management, and community development processes with information on a new tool available to communities to help define and focus growth and development.

On June 10, 2004, the State Planning Council approved an amendment to Handbook 16: Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan, to allow the voluntary designation of "Growth Centers" by municipalities via the Comprehensive Planning Process. This amendment, a copy of which is enclosed, provides the option for municipalities to designate growth centers meeting specific criteria in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan, and outlines the process by which the state will respond.

Background

In 2002, the Governor's Growth Planning Council proposed a "Growth Centers" program as a means for communities and the state to work together to focus growth and development within areas having, or planned to have, supporting infrastructure and services to properly accommodate that growth. As defined by the Growth Planning Council...

"Growth centers are dynamic and efficient centers for development that have a core of commercial and community services, residential development, and natural and built landmarks and boundaries that provide a sense of place."

Guidance

While their designation is optional, municipalities are encouraged to consider designating growth centers within their Comprehensive Plans as a means to shape the future development patterns of the community.

"Encouragement of development within identified growth centers is intended to reduce the pressure for sprawl development outside of the growth centers. Development in the growth center draws

development pressure away from critical or unique natural, cultural, and historic resources located outside of the growth center."

Other characteristics of Growth Centers...

- Growth centers include already developed centers and those that are planned for development.
- Growth centers differ in size, regional importance, and services provided.
- Growth Centers share common characteristics such as:
 - public and private investments in services, facilities, and buildings;
 - investments in transportation, water supply, and wastewater disposal systems; and
 - some combination of schools, commercial and industrial buildings, and housing.

Technical Assistance

The Growth Planning Council has authorized the creation of multi-disciplinary, state agency technical assistance teams to provide guidance to municipalities desiring to designate growth centers. Technical assistance teams will be assembled by Statewide Planning Program in response to specific requests from communities. These teams will offer communities information and guidance on planning, development, permitting, and funding issues relating to approved growth centers.

Further Information

- See the Growth Centers Report at:
<http://www.planning.ri.gov/gpc/pdf/gpc.pdf>
- Contact the R.I. Statewide Planning Program
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908
www.planning.ri.gov
- Local Comprehensive Plans staff:

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