

MEMORANDUM

date: September 8, 2006
to: Blueprint for Good Growth Consortium
from: Robert H. Freilich
Telephone Number: (213) 683-6314
subject: Issues for 9-14-06 Consortium Discussion
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The success of the Blueprint for Good Growth will rely on the commitment of member jurisdictions to the Plan's goals, objectives and policies and their willingness to implement the plan in good faith. Without this mutual commitment and the ability to trust each other to carry out the plan, there can be no county-wide growth coordination. At our meeting on September, 14, I'd like to ensure that each of the members clearly understands the important elements of BGG implementation discussed in this memo and agrees with the direction recommended by your Steering Committee.

Overview. BGG is an effort to coordinate growth decisions county-wide to promote more cost-effective growth patterns that will enable the participants to maintain the quality of life without the exorbitant increases in taxes and utility rates that frequently accompany rapid growth. The limitation on city annexation beyond areas of impact creates the market for the infill of transportation corridors, activity centers and downtown development for the benefit of all cities and the county. If the areas of impact have no meaning¹, it will create a race between unlimited sprawl by cities and unlimited development approvals by the county in unincorporated areas. Similarly, the current county policy of encouraging development in unincorporated areas in order to generate limited short-term "building permit fee" revenue is short-sighted and worsens costs for county sheriff, fire and emergency services through unlimited sprawl development.² The effect on ACHD budgets for road improvements will be to shift an increasing proportion of available funding for new capital projects to soaring operation and maintenance costs created by rural sprawl.

Area of Impact Expansion. The BGG policies advocate the timely adjustment of areas of impact to accommodate 20 years worth of growth. While the cities will be asked to demonstrate the need for expanded boundaries and the existence of long-range plans to provide needed facilities, they also will be asked to forego annexation beyond a rational 20-year growth boundary. To make this palatable to the cities, the County must avoid approving urban development at the fringe of each city's area of impact.

¹ Areas of impact can be rendered meaningless by cities' annexation beyond their boundaries or by the county's failure to extend the boundaries to accommodate a reasonable amount of future growth that enables cities to plan effectively, or by the county's approval of extensive urban development outside established areas of impact.

² The coming slowdown in residential construction will magnify these deficits because new building permit activity will slacken as it always does but the operation and maintenance costs for roads and public safety will only increase.

Expanded areas of impact will achieve the results desired by all of the parties – a better and more economical pattern of growth and an increase in the amount of growth as greater densities are achieved closer in versus low density sprawl. More significantly it will be the only solution to greater growth in the industrial, commercial and office non-residential sectors. Finally, sprawl will eat up the county's limited supplies of land which will push development into Canyon County with even greater traffic and air quality problems in addition to infrastructure and fiscal deficiencies.

More Stringent Limitations on Planned Communities Outside Areas of Impact. Regardless of the design of the planned communities, too much growth in outlying areas will erode the viability of existing urban areas, increase cumulative facility and service costs, limit mobility options and more rapidly consume the open lands that are a critical element of the quality of life in Ada County. The BGG does not set an absolute limit on growth outside areas of impact, but points out that development in excess of 7% of county-wide growth reflects a failure in local growth policy that should be remedied. The plan also recommends more stringent limitations on planned communities in rural areas so they do not shift cost burdens to existing of existing areas. These fiscal burdens must account for all capital, operations and maintenance costs. All planned communities should be required to meet the adequate public facilities requirements established by ACHD for roads, as well as for public safety (police, fire and emergency service), water availability and quality, air quality, schools, off-site drainage for stormwater, open space and parks.

Adequate Public Facilities. This third leg of the growth coordination platform established within the BGG is essential to ensure that development decisions by local governments do not overwhelm the capacities of other service providers to meet the demands for transportation, water, sewer, stormwater, schools and police, fire and emergency services. All of the studies and findings for the BGG point to the fragmentation of service provision and land use decision-making responsibilities, which has enabled local governments to ignore the impacts of newly approved development on other service providers creating an imminent threat to the quality of life in Ada County. The establishment and enforcement of adequate public facility standards will ensure that new development occurs at a pace in locations that enable essential service providers to keep up with the demands generated by growth.

On September 14th, the Consortium should take as much time as necessary to ensure that we have consensus on these key policy directives. This is essential to provide clear direction to your county, city and ACHD staff members of your intent to implement BGG policies. If we are unable to support these critical plan elements, I do not believe that the Blueprint can be successful. I urge all members to discuss this fully with their staffs, planning commissions and legislative members. Each member should be prepared to advocate any alternative position taking, however, full account of the needs of all other members and of the region itself.

Thank you.