

Dusting Off a Tool Crafted by ICL's Founders

ICL's first legislative victory, shared with the League of Women Voters and carried off by folks from around the state, was passage of Idaho's 1975 Local Planning Act. It has survived more than a decade of legislative attempts at weakening.

Reputed to be among the best planning laws in the country, ours has passed the test of time at least in part because it has not been fully implemented. With Idaho fast becoming one of the most popular areas in the country, it behooves us to begin using the tool crafted by our organizational forbears.

Among the purposes of the act are the following:

To ensure that the important environmental features of the state and localities are protected and enhanced.

To avoid undue concentration of population and overcrowding of land.

To ensure that the development is commensurate with the physical characteristics of the land.

To protect life and property in areas subject to natural hazards and disasters.

To protect fish, wildlife, and recreation resources.

To avoid undue water and air pollution.

To accomplish these purposes, the law requires local governments to prepare, implement, review and update a comprehensive plan for all land within its jurisdiction. The plan must consider (a) previous and existing conditions, (b) trends, (c) desirable goals and objectives or desirable future situations for each planning component. Unless it specifies reasons a particular component is not needed, the plan must include 12 specific components: **Population; Economics; Land Use; Natural Resource; Hazardous Areas; Public Service Facilities and Utilities; Transportation; Recreation; Special areas or Sites; Housing; Community Design; Implementation**

The law gives communities broad powers to consider additional planning components and subject matter in their plans.

It explicitly enables communities to adopt standards for building design; blocks, lots, and tracts of land; yards, courts, greenbelts, planting strips, parks and other open spaces; trees; signs; parking spaces; roadways, streets, lanes, bicycle-ways, pedestrian walkways, right-of-way, grades, alignments and intersections; lighting; easements for public utilities; access to streams, lakes, and viewpoints; water systems; sewer systems; storm drainage systems, street numbers and names; house numbers; schools; hospitals and other

public and private development.

These standards may be made part of city ordinances. In other words, they can have the force of law. Furthermore, whenever these ordinances impose higher standards than any other law or local ordinance, the higher standards shall govern. Pretty heady stuff eh?

— Gary Richardson

Gary Richardson is the southwestern ICL Board representative. He represents Ada ICL on the city's foothills committee, which he co-chairs with ICL member Kay Hummel and developer Colin Connell.



Diane Ronayne

Ada ICL member's hold meeting in Camel Back Park to discuss future development of Hull's Gulch, a key Boise foothills natural area.

Boiseans Work on Hillside Planning

In Boise, a group of citizens, many of whom are ICL members, has recently tackled drawing up a master plan for the foothills that backdrop the city. In February 1990, hundreds showed up for two nights of public hearings and scores testified on the importance of the Boise Front.

Developers with dollar signs in their eyes, environmentalists who see only Nature to be preserved, and a full spectrum of opinionated folks inbetween have been meeting twice a month since then on a committee appointed by the Boise City council. The group's progress has been tedious.

Boise's hillside building ordinances were strengthened last winter, and a statement of consensus goals for future foothills development is in the offing. But the greatest success has been an increased concern by city planners and council members, and a growing awareness that the vast majority of their constituents, including the more enlightened developers, want carefully guided development in vulnerable areas.

A largely unnoticed 1991 addition to the Local Planning Act was drafted by Boise City Attorney Buz Fawcett at the behest of his boss, Mayor Dirk Kempthorne. The amendment enables cities to condition the rezoning of property, an important tool for guiding development of land as it is annexed.

Large developments are being planned for several environmentally sensitive and scenic areas on the Boise Front. The mayor and council have both the legal tools and the political support to ensure they are done right.

— G.R.