ULI/RCM Environment Committee Update

ULI Regional Council of Mayors

February 8, 2010

Bonestroo

ULI/RCM Environment Committee Members

- Debbie Goettel, Co-Chair, Mayor, City of Richfield

- John Shardlow, Co-Chair, Bonestroo

- Bill Serks, MPCA

- Bob Engstrom, Engstrom Co.

- Brendon Slotterback, Dakota County

- Ciara Schlichting, Bonestroo

- Eliza Clark, Paydirt

- Emily Goodman, City of St. Paul

- J. Drake Hamilton, Fresh Energy

- Jenna Fletcher, Trust for Public Land

- Jim Erkel, MN Center for Environmental Advocacy

- JoAnna Hicks,

- Joanna Vossen, Larkin Hoffman

- Kristina Smitten, Smitten Group

- Michael Huber, Blue Cross Blue Shield

- Philipp Muessig, MPCA

- Rick Carter, LHB Corp.

- Sean Flannery, Tetra Tech

- Sheri Brezinka, USGBC

- Susan Schmidt, Trust for Public Land

2010 Work Plan Summary

- Support Minnesota GreenStep Cities Demonstration Project

- Work to Streamline the Minnesota Environmental Review Program

  - Work with two Metro cities to serve as pilots to prepare an AUAR Certified Comprehensive Plan

  - Continue to Actively Engage With ULI District Council Sustainability Committees to Share Best Practices

Background to AUAR Initiative

- Alternative Area-wide Reviews (AUARs) are accepted substitutes for Environmental Assessment Worksheets (EAWs) and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), in certain types of projects

- Ideally suited for large scale projects that are going to develop out over a long time period

Background to AUAR Initiative

- AUARs allow cities to study different scenarios, instead of assessing a definitive project

- Unlike an EIS which is simply information for decision makers, AUARs require the preparation of detailed *"Mitigation Plans"*

- Mitigation Plans are officially adopted by cities and they have the same weight as a local ordinance

Background to AUAR Initiative

- Comprehensive Planning if mandatory within the seven county Metropolitan Area

- Local Governments prepare and adopt comprehensive plans that evaluate alternative future challenges and opportunities (scenarios)

- They are required by law to adopt "official controls" to implement their plans

Background to AUAR Initiative

- Current EQB rules require Responsible Governmental Units (RGUs) to prepare Environmental Assessment Worksheets (EAWs) and Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) regardless how completely the subject project was studied in their comprehensive plans or how effectively their official controls would mitigate adverse environmental effects

The Proposition

- Why not modify the comprehensive planning process a bit to ensure that they satisfy the evaluation of scenarios as required by the AUAR rules?

- Why not organize and design the Implementation chapters in our comp plans to effectively incorporate mitigation plans?

Why Pursue this Approach?

Any future development in a community with a comprehensive plan that incorporated an AUAR and Mitigation Plan would be exempt from any future environmental review

Provided that future development was less than or equal to the intensity and characteristics of one of the scenarios it studied

Benefits:

- Avoids duplication and unproductive redundancy in the development approval process

- Could save more than a year of time and thousands and in some cases millions of dollars

- Can ensure that higher environmental performance is accomplished

Considerations:

- There is nothing about this idea that violates any state law or rule

- There have already been several very large AUARs that have been successfully prepared and implemented:

  - Maple Grove Gravel Mining Area, 35W Corridor Lino Lakes, Southbridge Area Shakopee, Twin Lakes in Roseville, Twinsville in Mpls., 50-year Growth Area in Hutchinson

Considerations

- Idea was recommended in the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota's Resources (LCCMR) Study: <u>A Statewide Conservation and Protection Plan</u>

- Also included in the report prepared by the MPCA on streamlining environmental review

Next Steps:

- Identify two pilot communities (one developing and one redeveloping – Richfield & Dayton?) and evaluate their comprehensive plans

- Design a process to incorporate an AUAR and Mitigation Plan into the comprehensive plan

- Seek funding