THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROGRAM: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

On January 21, 2000, Governor Paul Cellucci and Lieutenant Governor Jane Swift issued Executive Order 418, a measure designed to help communities plan for new housing opportunities while balancing economic development, transportation infrastructure improvements and open space preservation. The impetus for the Executive Order was the Governor's commitment to creating housing opportunities for families and individuals across a broad range of incomes. In Governor Cellucci's "State of the State" Address, the Governor said, "To keep our economy strong, we must expand the supply of housing that is affordable across a broad range of incomes. We need housing for parents making the transition from welfare to work. We need homes for the police officers, the firefighters and the teachers who want to live in the community where they work. We also need housing for the young people who want to raise a family in the community where their families raised them."

In that spirit, Executive Order 418 directs the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction and the Department of Economic Development to provide assistance to cities and towns for community planning. The order makes available up to $30,000 in planning services to each of the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts for the creation of a Community Development Plan.

Planning for the future is not simple; it involves understanding and balancing the needs of people of all ages and income levels. Each community is unique -- and accordingly each faces a unique set of challenges regarding future planning and development. The complex housing and transportation issues facing a burgeoning suburb are not the same as those confronting an older industrial city or town where economic development and reuse of existing buildings may be more pressing concerns. Planning may require hard choices about which resources need the most protection and where development can occur most appropriately.

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A successful plan sets priorities for how development should occur in the future, what kind of development it should be, and where it should be located. The plan should be based on accurate and detailed information, and should reflect a consensus vision of the community's future.

Each Community Development Plan (CD Plan) will address:

Housing: Location, type, and quantity of new housing units including housing for individuals and families across a broad range of incomes.

Open Space and Resource Protection: Location, type, and quantity of open space to be protected including identification and prioritization of environmentally critical unprotected open space, land critical to sustaining surface and groundwater quality and quantity, and environmental resources.

Economic Development: Location, type, and quantity of commercial and industrial economic development.

Transportation: Location and description of any improvements to transportation, including matters of safety, access, congestion and transit, intermodal connections and environmental considerations.

This guidebook, *Building Vibrant Communities,* is designed to guide a community through the process of creating an effective Community Development Plan.

These pages describe the program's requirements and procedures, and offer suggestions, recommendations and guidance on the CD Plan process.

Communities differ from one another not only in terms of population, density, geographical size, natural resources, and infrastructure, but also in planning capacity, experience, and progress to date. Creating a Community Development Plan is an excellent way for a community to establish a baseline picture, and to begin to examine the particular development issues that it will be facing in the future. If the community has undertaken an extensive master planning effort, then the Community Development Plan program can afford the opportunity and resources needed to focus in on particular challenges or priorities.

A Word about Terminology:

There are a number of words that describe collective efforts of more that one town (e.g., regional, subregional, multicommunity, interlocal, etc.) For example, the Massachusetts Highway Department generally uses regional or subregional to reference three or more communities. Different state agencies and planners will often use one term over another. Larger consortia of communities are often referred to as regions or subregions. This guidebook primarily uses the term ***interlocal*** *to describe groups of communities. The use of one term over another is not intended to dictate the number of communities any single community could consider working with during the development of a CD Plan. However a minimum of three communities is necessary to complete the transportation element of the CD Plan.*

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This chapter provides an overview of the steps involved in the Community Development (CD) Plan Process. Chapter F of the guidebook "Addressing the Four Core Elements" more fully explains each step. Appendices address facilitation techniques, sample strategies, and additional resources. Throughout the guidebook, sidebars provide additional information, tips on proceeding, and items of interest, including the development and protection strategies Massachusetts communities have successfully used.

STEP 1
GIS maps, buildout analysis and other community data

In Chapter A "Buildout Analysis, GIS Map and Community Data Profile for Your Community" of this book, you will find a description of the GIS maps and buildout analysis that will be provided to your community by EOEA. Reduced versions (8.5" x 11") of the buildout maps and analysis are included in this guidebook. These documents provide a picture of all the development that could happen in the community under current zoning codes and known environmental and other land use constraints. In other words, the buildout analysis previews the future of the community if no changes to current zoning are made.

Chapter A also contains additional data on the community, such as information on current and projected population, extent of building activity, home sales, etc.

The GIS maps, analysis and data are important resources which will benefit the CD Plan process.

Finally, a list of agencies and resources in the region is included.

For the community to do

The information contained in Chapter A will assist the community in discussing the pros and cons of different planning options. This is your starting point: the basis from which the community's vision of the future will emerge.

After you have received your guidebook, your chief elected official should contact your RPA and sign an agreement outlining the roles and responsibilities of the community and the RPA in undertaking this effort.

Regional Planning Agencies:

The regional planning agencies (RPAs) are public bodies located in 13 regions throughout the state. They are charged with coordinating planning in that region. RPAs provide expertise to cities and towns, developing community-based planning that may include master plans, open space plans, or traffic impact studies. RPAs will also work with several communities on interlocal planning issues. Information on how to contact your RPA is included in Chapter A of this guidebook. The RPA is responsible for the transportation element of your CD Plan.

STEP 2
The Community Visioning process

In this phase, residents and local officials will work together to draft a Community Vision Statement, complete an Assets and Liabilities Inventory, and define a planning process (see Chapter C "Creating a Community Vision"). A community may choose to work with a professional facilitator to aid in this process (using up to $5,000 of the planning services allocation of $30,000) or decide to self-facilitate.

Executive Order 418 defines the Community Development Plan as addressing housing, economic development, transportation, and open space and resource protection issues. The community will identify local concerns and priorities for each of these areas.

For the community to do:

The community may facilitate this process or use a professional facilitator for guidance; the RPA has a list of facilitators that you can use (see Chapter E"Choosing a Consultant"). The RPA will enter into an agreement with the facilitator on the community's behalf.

If the community chooses to self-facilitate in the Visioning phase, helpful advice on facilitation techniques is included in Appendix AA.

With residents, create an inventory of Assets and Liabilities. What are the city or town's primary resources? What are the main sources of difficulty? (More information on creating the Inventory appears in Chapter C "Creating a Community Vision").

Hold a public meeting eliciting ideas and concerns from all citizens.

STEP 3
Work with your RPA to develop the Scope of Services

For the community to do:

Prepare and file a proposed Scope of Services indicating how the community will use the balance of its $30,000 in services to hire consultants to assist the community in completing the CD Plan. As discussed under Step 4 below, your RPA will submit the proposed Scope of Services to the state for review and approval. Once the state approves the Scope, the RPA will sign agreements with consultants to implement the Scope. (See Chapter F"Community Development Planning: Addressing the Four Core Elements" for special conditions that apply to the transportation element of the CD Plan.
See also Chapter D"Creating a Scope of Services").

STEP 4
Hiring the consultant(s)

Once the community has an approved Scope of Services defining the challenges facing the community, a professional planning consultant or RPA staff, as the community determines, will gather more specific detailed information and/or begin to offer strategies and solutions for the community's consideration. The state has a list of consultants and RPAs from all regions of Massachusetts with expertise in one or more of the four core areas (economic development, transportation, open space and resource protection, and housing) to be included in the CD Plan.

The RPA will sign agreements with the selected consultants and apply all or a portion of the $30,000 planning services allotment for the tasks to be performed (Note: If a community has used the $5,000 made available for Visioning and other preliminary tasks, the remainder of the allocation is applied for the consultant/RPA services.) See Chapters D & E for more details on this process.

Among the services offered by the consultants and RPAs on the MSA Consultants List are:

- Facilitation
- Infrastructure analysis
- Data collection and analysis
- Legal services
- Financial analysis and forecasting
- Market assessment

* For a complete list, see Chapter E "Choosing a Consultant".

For the community to do

Work with your RPA to select one or more consultants practicing in your geographic area that specializes in the concerns facing your community (as indicated in your Scope of Services).

Note: Communities can chose to do many of the planning activities on their own.

STEP 5
Creating the Plan

The community and the consultants chosen will work together to create the community's CD Plan, a document that will contain the guidelines and strategies for future development. The plan will be primarily image-based, using GIS maps, accompanied by pictures, diagrams, and/or text as may be necessary for explanatory purposes.

STEP 6
After the Plan is finished

- Distribute the completed plan to the community; keep residents involved in and supportive of the planning process.
- Send four copies of the plan to DHCD for distribution to the state interagency working group, and one to the RPA.
- Recognize that the plan represents a first step in the planning process.
- Use the information and insight gained as a springboard for additional planning and/or implementation activities.