



Michael Matthes <mematthe@gocolumbiamo.com>

[CMO]: Peoples' Visioning 'Plan B' Concept for Mr. Matthes

Monta Welch <mntwelch1@gmail.com>

Wed, Feb 26, 2014 at 12:25 PM

To: mrgotche@gocolumbiamo.com, Monta Welch <mntwelch1@gmail.com>, cmo@gocolumbiamo.com

PEOPLES' VISIONING PLAN B SUMMARY POINTS:

- 1) Zoning codes ahead of new development—sitting ducks without them—until then, a development moratorium
- 2) Definition of Smart Growth
- 3) Green Buildings, Codes and Renewables: 100% Renewable as Goal
- 4) Hard and Soft Infrastructure to be assessed to new and redevelopment, as if new, at significantly higher costs or Impact Fees, User-Based Rate Structure, and/or Trip Generation models
- 5) Consider Bill Weitkemper's suggestions on billing, available funds from rate and billing changes, sewer concerns, and potential rearrangement of certain projects and work timeframes
- 6) Look at City Department Finances, Bonds, Tax or Rate Increases or Refunds As Appropriate
- 7) Full investigation and audit of all our financial balances and present funding situation

PEOPLES' VISIONING PLAN B:

-
From PV's Visioning, which often meshes with Columbia's Vision process results in the original Columbia Vision, as well as large parts of the Comprehensive Plan, out of that earlier document, we request the following Seven Steps:

Step One: Get thoughtful, public-supported, proper and updated zoning codes in place ahead of ANY NEW development or redevelopment that considers these documents and the voice of the public especially the downtown neighborhoods bordering the District and surrounding area. Consider a zoning overlay that would account for historic preservation and appropriate density, other principles of smart growth, as well as form based building codes and net-zero energy building requirements for all of Columbia, but especially this portion of our city as we struggle with infill and density. **Until then, maintain a moratorium** as the public and Downtown Leadership Council asked for over a year ago, strongly supported by many in the community, and asked for again with the Niedermeyer uproar.

Step Two: Always use the full definition of Smart Growth while considering our documents and additional works such as Eban Fodor's *Better Not Bigger: How to Take Control of Urban Growth and Improve Your Community*, in which he points out: 'Contrary to accepted wisdom, rapid urban growth can leave communities permanently scarred, deeply in debt, with unaffordable housing, a lost sense of community and sacrificed environmental quality.', along with other works, some cited herein, for a much better understanding of a more thoughtful, just, fair and sustainable development that most Columbian's are calling for.

About 15 years ago, a Carnegie Mellon professor named Richard Florida quantified something many of us had long suspected, that throughout the last half of the 20th century, well-educated young adults were leaving industrial cities such as Buffalo and Cleveland, and moving to high-tech cities such as Seattle, Minneapolis and Austin. He coined the term "the creative class," to describe these affluent, well-educated young adults, and praised cities that attracted them by prioritizing cultural districts, thriving downtowns, LGBT acceptance, farmers' markets and greenways and green space. Not surprisingly, Richard Florida had a fair amount of praise for Columbia, and other small Midwestern college cities such as Madison, Bloomington and Ann Arbor.

In early 2012, as the community was objecting to EEZ, TIF and the like, Richard Florida made a rather startling statement about the cities that had been so successful in pulling in members of the creative class. Or at least it was startling to him, and to others that it came from him. For most of us, it was something that we had been experiencing or long suspected. He said new data showed that the people who had already been living in those creative class cities often wound up being no better off than they were before the influx of new people and in some cases were worse off. Sure, perhaps there were some more job opportunities for some of them in retail or construction, for example. But the cost of living had skyrocketed. Commute times had also risen tremendously. Small gains folks may have made in hourly wage or hours worked were more than offset by all the new costs of this 'creative class driven' growth. This sure sounds like the case for Columbia as we've added been nearly 2,000 new residents per year for the last 15 years, and have grown by a third in that time period.

Some Columbians and many others in America have long accepted that we must fear the absence of growth. In the Midwest, that is a very strong fear because we're surrounded by places that have done the opposite of grow, and we have seen their consequences. Some of this is driven and explained more in 2 books referred to time and again in the debate over EEZ: 'The Great American Jobs Scam, Corporate Tax Dodging and the Myth of Job Creation' by Greg Leroy, free to read online at www.GreatAmericanJobsScam.com, available for check-out at our library; and, the other is Colin Gordon's story of negative consequences in St. Louis with these types of funding mechanisms associated with negative growth in 'Mapping Decline'. As the saying goes, be careful what you wish for, because you might get it. What Columbia has gotten is an unprecedented strain on roads, all infrastructure including schools, public safety and more.

So it is time to completely reconsider our viewpoint of growth, and put much more of a focus on what type it is, how fast its occurring, what it looks like and its real costs, rather than only accounting for touted or certain perceptions of its benefits. Data less than a year old shows, those benefits have been greatly overstated.

Step Three: It is Peoples' Visioning's recommendation, as part of our Vision and community guiding documents, that green building codes and stretch green building codes be adopted, to include all buildings, commercial as well as homes, and that these improved building codes be immediately applied. This will significantly improve sustainability as it eases utility and resource demand provided by infrastructure for electric, sewer and water, even solid waste, as we 'train' ourselves, our residents and business persons to REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE, in that order. This will cut amounts and therefore costs of infrastructure and services, contributing greatly to sustainability and to Columbia becoming more and more powered by renewable energy, as called for by Peoples' Visioning at City Council, December 3, 2012, when we called for 80% renewable energy by 2015, and offered a plan to get us all or most of the way to that goal, which we still offer. Peoples' Visioning also brought information on a number of other cities at higher rates of renewable energy than our request, at 86%, 95%, 100% and another, at that time, soon to be 100%, as models and examples to show you our plan and Council request is definitely achievable and certainly not 'pie in the sky'.

Step Four: Once these other steps are in place, Peoples' Visioning proposes addressing what others and other Visioning documents also propose in asking development to be fairly charged for the actual and real costs of the Impact of their development that, 'but for' it, we would not have the added burden of cost to all of the following infrastructure needs, as follows:

* roads and lower-impact forms of city bus or similar forms of urban mass-transportation modes, walking and bicycling paths, as well as regional high-speed rail and bus services, as these all are aspects of infrastructure costs, are more sustainable and need to be part of assessing impact fees and/or user-based, trip generation assessment models in the transit category and link or extrapolate burden on other needs including

* water;

* sewer;

* electricity;

* followed by fire and police protection;

* libraries and public schools;

* as well as green spaces, so crucial to public health and our quality of place and life, including all types of publically owned parks, with edible landscaping and 'food forests' along with designated 'wild, untouched, urban green spaces', urban forest or wildlife preserves and greenbelt areas, along with any remaining and historic scenic roads and routes as well as potential scenic new routes!

Assess impacts on these hard and soft infrastructure needs and their associated costs and link to impacts and user-based models, as recommended by Peoples' Visioning, as well as mentioned in the minority report of the Infrastructure Task Force, focused solely on roads in that report, now recommended by some of those members and others to include **all forms** of necessary infrastructure, as noted above. Peoples' Visioning, has recently led the community in calling for this, along with our allies and co-sponsors as well as the broader Columbia public voice in our several, often ignored, guiding documents and processes supported by the public, as well as several seated Council Persons, as their representatives.

Cost assessments must also, very appropriately, include long-range upkeep and general maintenance as a realistic part of the fair cost of development—just as any homeowner plans for costs to repair and maintain their homes. These maintenance and repair fees can be charged at an appropriate rate in any number of creative ways to assist, if necessary, to pay them as long as it does not ever come out of taxation assessments like the TIF, EEZ and similar mechanisms! Some portion of this maintenance fee must be up-front in an escrow-type fund for such services and needs and be a part of any real estate sales contracts for properties that may eventually change hands.

Further, Peoples' Visioning suggests a reversal of the present development model with regards to costs assessed to accommodate for the above cost areas, all necessary for sustainability and quality of life infrastructure needs and services. We recommend something like what is also being confirmed and supported by public input, over and over again, and in an 'unofficial' but significant poll non-the-less, Councilman Thomas' poll on development fees. Our Peoples' Visioning suggestion is something like 70% to 80% is fair to assess to developers for development fees and costs to pay their fair share for infrastructure their developments (and development profits) must share with the community.

Step Five: Adopt all of Mr. Bill Weitkemper's suggestions to improve funds in his area of expertise, with 40 years of experience in our Public works department, not only to improve funds collected, while fairly assessing use and corresponding rates to encourage more customer conservation at all levels, but also essentially adopting a 'conservation rate structure' across the entire utility spectrum to reduce costs of related infrastructure to all parties and be distributed more equitably and more fairly with a user-based system and/or conservation rate pricing structure. Consider Mr. Weitkemper's, and other's ideas, of which PV approves, to shuffle or re-prioritize a few pre- approved monies and projects to lessen the system's downtown bottleneck and upgrade infrastructure, enhancing the whole system while addressing public health consequences and our relationship to EPA regarding storm water run-off, which needs to be kept on the front burner from here on out as we grow. To this Peoples' Visioning adds that we must set an example for diligent and continuing reduction of strong and toxic use of chemicals and their applications across our system to aid in water quality and EPA compliance!

Step Six: Finally, after the above steps and methods are in place and being utilized, and 'development costs reassessment' policies are in place, we then, and only then, look at our city finances and department balances or fund balances, or consider bonds or tax increases to pay for what is a true and fair cost in any development, new and/or redevelopment, as well. It is high-time to upgrade these old policies, asked for many years ago, with these guiding principles and available models and processes directed herein. We are just now learning we must listen to the people, follow their written voices in our guiding documents, and further public voice, confirming and requesting this and adding, many times, how to 'get there'. As we revamp zoning, to include historical overlays and form-based zoning, etc... it is the right and appropriate time

to also upgrade this and other policies and codes, listen to the people, and implement a 'new cost to develop' in Columbia to reflect the real costs, and need for costs to be fairly shared. Just because developers have been able to pay less in 'the forever past', does not make it 'unfair' to finally change to a more just and fair policy and, that somehow doing so is unfair to them. For far too long, inequitably, and clearly unsustainably, it has unfairly fallen to the poor and the public to do without, as we have, or pay more in taxes, as we have! **This sixth step is unlikely to be necessary if all the important Five prior Steps above are taken.**

Thank you for remedying this long time inequitable, fiscally irresponsible, and unsustainable imbalance with the present and immediate circumstance we face!

Step Seven: Once the above steps have been done or going on simultaneously with the assessments and calculations required for this imbalance correction, Peoples' Visioning calls for a full investigation and audit of all our financial balances and present funding situation, done in a responsible and transparent fashion with the public able to easily follow, online or in some other way, to fully ascertain the accurate state of our shared public funds, then determining appropriate balances, uses and adherence to our City Charter, laws and ordinances regarding those funds and balances, or lack thereof, with appropriate explanations for the circumstances we would find. If it is determined there is excess cash, after this full audit, investigation and exposure, then those appropriate monies will need to be fairly refunded to utility customers, according to the charges and rate structures during which those excess monies were acquired, rather than be used, yet again, to subsidize development. For this and other reasons of fairness: that the public has been paying more than its fair share for far too long, we suggest these more fair payment options for handling our present and future development infrastructure problems, that 'but for' new development, we would need 'some' upgrades, but how some look at it now is as if development has just arrived on an empty plot of land and that these repairs and upgrades will cost not more, and could possibly cost less, than any development in that 'just arrived on an empty plot of land' scenario.

Thank you for implementing these important steps and changes for the public.

Respectfully,

Monta Welch
Director
Columbia Peoples' Visioning
Founder/President
Columbia Climate Change Coalition
Interfaith Care for Creation
[573-443-4717](tel:573-443-4717)

 **PEOPLE14.doc**
45K