

COMMUNITY GUIDED PLANNING & ZONING INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

Community Guided Planning & Zoning (CGPZ) is an initiative of the Maine Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC or Commission) through which the Northern Maine Development Commission will assist Aroostook County to proactively plan for land uses in its unorganized and deorganized areas (the UT). This prospective planning and zoning initiative will provide those living, working, and owning land, as well as others with a direct interest in a region, an opportunity to evaluate the present and future land use needs for their region and to develop a strategy for meeting these needs. Prospective planning and zoning also will allow the LUPC to ensure greater predictability of land use regulation for businesses, property owners, and others with an interest in the use of land and development patterns in the UT.

Many approaches to planning proactively for land use in the UT are possible through CGPZ. The goal is to produce practical and effective recommendations – perhaps for a rezoning, the creation of new zones, a transportation and infrastructure plan, an industrial growth plan, a recreation plan, an open space strategy, a habitat connectivity strategy, a comprehensive plan for a specific area, or some other approach or some combination of the above approaches – in light of the need for more prospective or proactive planning, particularly in identifying appropriate areas for economic development.

After an open application period, the LUPC selected Aroostook County as the first region to participate in the CGPZ process. The Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC) prepared a proposal and is now facilitating the planning process. NMDC has appointed a Steering Committee representing diverse interests whose task will be to lead the planning effort, conduct regular meetings open to the public, and develop a draft final report and recommendations. As described in NMDC's Process Document – a document developed by the Steering Committee which outlines the planning structure - the process is designed to provide opportunities for a broad spectrum of residents, property owners, and interested parties to participate, as well as to allow for a respectful consideration of different views. This work will take place at meetings held by NMDC starting in the Fall of 2013, with video conferencing available, when possible. These meetings are open to anyone interested and the public is encouraged to attend.

The first Steering Committee meeting is Wednesday, October 23rd at 9:00 AM at Caribou Inn and Convention Center in Caribou. For questions regarding the NMDC process, contact Jay Kamm, Senior Planner at 498-8736 or by email at jkamm@nmdc.org.

WHAT IS PROSPECTIVE PLANNING AND ZONING?

Prospective planning and zoning is a process that allows residents, property owners, businesses and other interested parties in the UT to work together to plan for future land uses of specific areas, including to allow for new appropriate uses which may include business, residential and/or recreational uses. Rather than a "top – down" plan from a State agency, this is an opportunity for a locally-driven redrawing of the map in the UT where co-operative, "bottom – up" solutions can be agreed upon by the participants and documented for LUPC consideration.

In regions that participate in a prospective planning and zoning process, suitable areas may be identified prospectively for commercial, residential and/or recreational uses, so that businesses and property owners can propose new uses with greater assurance that the proposal is appropriate for that location.

A CGPZ process may include, or result in, rezoning of specific areas for future development. This may allow businesses or property owners to propose new uses or development without the need for seeking

a rezoning of the land. This would allow proposed projects to go straight to the application processes for the actual development work, thereby simplifying and expediting the review process. New prospectively zoned areas may allow residents, property owners, businesses and other interested parties to plan ahead with greater confidence for strategic investment in land use decision-making, whether for commercial and residential development, resource management or conservation.

WHAT IS THE LUPC'S ROLE AND WHAT IS IT LOOKING FOR?

The LUPC is a nine-member board charged with overseeing land use planning and much of the land use permitting in the UT, an area that covers almost half of the State. The Commission acts much as a planning board would in an organized town. Among the LUPC's responsibilities, as set forth in State law, is to encourage appropriate residential, recreational, commercial and industrial land uses; to honor the rights and participation of residents and property owners in the UT while recognizing the unique value of these lands and waters to the State; to discourage the intermixing of incompatible industrial, commercial, residential and recreational activities; and to encourage well-planned and well-managed multiple uses, including conservation, of land and resources and to encourage and facilitate regional economic viability.

Ultimately, any product developed through the CGPZ process will require Commission acceptance if it is to be implemented by the Commission and any rezoning or modification to the Commission's rules must satisfy statutory criteria. Throughout the CGPZ process, LUPC staff will assist NMDC and the Steering Committee by providing information and highlighting the relevant statutory requirements. This will help ensure that the result of the Aroostook region's significant commitment of time and resources will both achieve local goals, and be consistent with LUPC's statutory review criteria as well as the Commission's statutory purpose and guiding principles.

When the LUPC receives the maps, plans or recommendations that the Steering Committee and NMDC produce, the Commission has identified a set of Overarching Principles that it will apply when determining whether to approve and act upon the recommendations. The product of the CGPZ effort and the process through which it is developed must:

- Ensure a locally driven, locally desired process
- Encourage broad participation
- Respect property owner equity
- Balance regional uniqueness and statewide consistency for stakeholders
- Be consistent with statutory purpose and guiding principles

These principles are furthered by NMDC's Process Document.

The goal of land use planning in the UT is to encourage the well-planned and well-managed multiple use, including conservation, of land and resources and to encourage and facilitate regional economic viability. It is hoped that Aroostook County will become a model for using the CGPZ process as a path to a stronger economic future.

WHAT CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE?

Are you a business owner, property owner, resident or otherwise familiar with some portion of the unorganized and deorganized areas of Aroostook County? Please consider participating in the Community Guided Planning and Zoning process. Your opinion and perspective will be valuable to the Steering Committee.