

# *Land Use as a Key to Low-Carbon Communities, City of Shoreline Mayor Will Hall*

## **Key Takeaways for Elected Leaders**

### History

- Shoreline rezoned areas around soon-to-be-built light rail stations and mandated that the new buildings be at least Built Green 4 Start certified.
- These policies dramatically reduce a household's climate footprint compared to a detached, single family home with a commute.
- Shoreline spent about 5 years going through this process and it was very controversial; existing areas subject to zoning changes were single family homes and people didn't want their houses torn down to build apartments for someone else (~3,000 homes).

### Lessons learned

- Very tough decisions made in the short term but the payoffs long term are significant; took some tough political work – people willing to take some big risks for the right thing.
- Part of the message framing what that the community was being gifted with light rail stations and that we have a responsibility to the region.
- Everything we build now should be green because we'll be stuck with it in 2050; so, if we don't build them "correctly" now, we'll have to reinvest in those buildings at that time or we won't meet our goals.
- Understand what motivates builders – incentives were in place before mandates but didn't work.

### Incentives

- According to Mayor Hall, the typical process only creates an "incentive" to build at 45 ft because the incentive isn't really enough to get developers to 70-80 ft given the extra cost.
- Instead of doing things that cost more as you scale up, Shoreline is going to shift the structure and tradeoffs so that you still have to provide open spaces, etc. even for smaller buildings (so more people want to go even higher density).
- How can you make sure the intended outcome is still intact?
  - Mayor Hall: Potential for loopholes exists in every city; Shoreline is looking at shifting from a menu-based approach that provides flexibility to an approach that 1) identifies those things that are most crucial for our community, and 2) then says you must do those things. This will remove some flexibility for builders – so need to be very clear about the tradeoffs.

### Q&A

- Is Shoreline moving away from encouraging big houses? Would that be embraced by the community?
  - Mayor Hall: Energy consumption is usually measured on a per square foot basis – a larger house uses more energy (for heating, water heating, lighting, etc.) than a smaller one, so from a carbon perspective, we should be encouraging people to live smaller.

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- However, we don't restrict home size in Shoreline. We are saying we want all new development to be high density near light rail (if you want a big house, purchase one that already exists); everything we build now should be climate friendly because the impacts will be very long lasting.
- is this as a lessening of rights for cities to create their own city type/culture?
  - Mayor Hall noted that different communities have different needs and that in Shoreline they have the ability to make those land use decisions for their community.
- How could Shoreline's approach work in other jurisdictions?
  - Mayor Hall said that 80% of Shoreline's zoning remains single family—this zoning change is only in small area (8%) around light rail and acknowledges that there are tradeoffs – there is displacement that can impact affordable housing options where that zoning changed.