

**Kaua'i General Plan Update
Community Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary**

February 16, 2016

4444 Rice Street, Lihu'e

Moikeha Building 2A/2B, Planning Commission Room

MEETING PURPOSE:

To convene the 9th meeting of the Community Advisory Committee for the Kaua'i General Plan (GP) Update project. The topic of the meeting was Infrastructure and Public Facilities.

CAC MEMBERS PRESENT:

Bill Arakaki	Sue Kanoho
Kurt Bosshard	Cammie Matsumoto
Bev Brody	Gary Pacheco
Helen Cox	Barbara Robeson
Luke Evslin	Tom Shigemoto
Randy Francisco	Susan Tai Kaneko
Laurie Ho	

PROJECT TEAM REPRESENTATIVES:

County of Kaua'i (COK) Agencies: Lyle Tabata (Public Works), Kirk Saiki (DOW), Ed Tschupp (Wastewater), Eddie Doi (DOW), Keith Suga (Mayor's Office), Michael Moule (Transportation), Troy Tanigawa (Solid Waste)

COK Planning: Marie Williams, Leanora Kaiaokamalie, Lee Steinmetz, Ruby Pap, Marisa Valenciano

SSFM International: Cheryl Soon, Katia Balassiano, Melissa White

Marine & Coastal Solutions International (facilitator): David Tarnas

PUBLIC ATTENDEES:

Larry Aaruda, Juno Ann Apalla, Addison Bulosan, Diana Butler, Bill Peterson, Jessica Else, Randy Jay, Ken Taylor, Max Trapp, JoAnn Yukimura

HANDOUTS:

The CAC members were given the following materials for inclusion in their binders:

- Meeting agenda
- Meeting presentation
- Updated CAC Schedule
- Infrastructure Policy Discussion Questions
- Draft Infrastructure Policy Matrix
- Infrastructure Analysis by SSFM International
- Summaries from CAC Meetings 6-8

These materials are all available for download at www.plankauai.com

MEETING SUMMARY:

Marie Williams of the County of Kaua'i Planning Department welcomed the group.

Melissa White of SSFM International reviewed the meeting agenda:

1. Objectives of Today's Meeting – Melissa White
2. Project Update on Outreach Efforts and Metrics for the GP Update - Marisa Valenciano, COK Planning Department; Melissa White, SSFM International
3. Main Presentation: Adequacy of Kaua'i Infrastructure for Current and Future Needs by Planning Area and Island-wide – Cheryl Soon, SSFM International
4. CAC Discussion of Infrastructure Policy in 2000 General Plan, Current Conditions and Needs – Facilitation by David Tarnas, Marine and Coastal Solutions International
5. Public Comment on Agenda Topics – Facilitated by David Tarnas, Marine and Coastal Solutions International

The presentation content is available for viewing and download at www.plankauai.com/events under CAC Meeting 9. The remainder of this summary focuses on input received through verbal and written comments.

RECORDED COMMENTS:

Infrastructure for Current and Future Needs

The following comments from CAC members were recorded during the main presentation on Infrastructure for Current and Future Needs, presented by Cheryl Soon of SSFM International.

- The de facto population number in the analysis is only 19k more than the resident population. That seems wrong. We have 23-25k visitors per day currently. Please check this number.
 - A: There are different methodologies for calculating de facto. This one comes from DBEDT. Some adjust for residents not on the island.
- If the de facto number came from DBEDT, use it.
- The same issue about de facto population arose in the 2000 GP Process.
- Does the well production number in the report include the surface water treatment plant?
 - A (Kirk): It says that 13.79 is the total production for the island, which is correct. So yes.
- The waste generation per person per day numbers cited for today are much lower than the numbers five years ago. Why is that?
 - A: County programs to reduce/divert waste account for most of this difference.
- Is the Wailuā River State Park really in Līhu'e District?
 - A: Yes
- Some of the school enrollment numbers are incorrect
 - A: DOE has promised to provide updated numbers this week.
- KCC is not listed in the presentation, and it is the island's only higher education institution.
 - A: It certainly should be and will be added.

- The power plant is not shown on the North Shore infrastructure map. Also, the location of the recycling centers need to be corrected (will send an e-mail).
 - A: We will review your e-mail comments and update the map accordingly.

CAC Discussion of Infrastructure Policy in the General Plan Update

The following comments from CAC members were recorded during the CAC discussion on Infrastructure policy, facilitated by David Tarnas of Marine & Coastal Solutions International.

Matrix of Draft Policies:

- Please send us the policy matrix in Word format so we can make comments on it.
- Will we have an opportunity for group discussion of the draft policies?
 - A: The policy discussion is an opportunity to ensure that the policies address the most important issues and concerns. When the draft plan is released the group will have an opportunity to discuss and revisit individual policies. In the meantime, feedback on the wording for the draft policies can be submitted in writing.
- Does the matrix show what has been deleted from the 2000 GP policies? Can we see how that has been changed so that we can compare?
 - A: Not in all cases. Some of the 2000 policies were combined, or removed because they have been addressed or no longer apply. Yes, we can distribute the more "complicated" version of the matrix that shows all of this. But we ask that the CAC use the simplified version for their comments and mark-ups.

Discussion Question 1: *What should be the relationship between infrastructure and the preferred growth areas? Should growth areas have priority for Infrastructure CIP investments? What are the best ways to create the link?*

- Every community has a town center, but that doesn't mean every town center is a "priority growth area." That said, absolutely, we should put efforts toward investing in infrastructure in known growth areas. Poipu is a perfect example. It should have a regional wastewater treatment plant.
- The east side lacks infrastructure, and with new EPA regulations, the existing wastewater deficiency could be further exacerbated. The County has an obligation to provide infrastructure to those areas that are already zoned and built out. It has been promised. Infrastructure priorities should not be at the expense of these obligations.
- We need to fix those areas that are deficient now first. Wastewater in Poipu especially.

Discussion Question 2: *What should be the priority relationships between:*

- *Upgrades to existing infrastructure versus servicing new areas*
- *Publicly-paid infrastructure versus developer paid*
- *Who pays?*

- The water chart on page 13, column 9 shows a large water deficiency in Līhu'e. Is that already limiting development in this district?
 - A (Kirk): There is not a current supply deficiency in Līhu'e (need to check #s). There is enough to service short term planned developments (Koheha Loa, DOT near the airport). If everything planned in the Līhu'e area was going to imminently be built, including all the Grove Farm lands, we would need to look at additional source, storage, and transmission, but that is not the case currently. In addition, it's important to understand how DOW makes its investment decisions. We prioritize meeting capacity in the areas we currently serve, and respond to capacity issues as they arise. We don't invest in areas that may or may not be built out in the future, until the plans are solidified. In any case, larger developments require that the developers invest in the needed water infrastructure.
- Larger developers understand that they need to provide their own water service on site, and in some cases off site. Knowing that, does the projected deficit reflect only County facilities or also private?
 - A: It includes both County and private.
- It should be understood that some of the deficit will be made up for over time as developers come in. How are these deficit numbers used in planning? The CIP should be based on the General Plan and the identification of future growth areas.
 - A (Kirk): The GP does inform the DOW's priorities in part, but it is mostly driven by responding to capacity issues, in addition to other factors such as emergency repairs. Available budget factors in to how projects are prioritized also. Some areas already have meter limitations. It is useful for DOW to know where the priority growth areas are to factor into their planning. The Water Use and Development Plan takes buildout scenarios and projects the water needed. The GP can help direct where that water is needed.
 - Kirk: The Water Plan will be updated in the next couple of years to plan until 2040. It identifies how existing systems will be maintained and expanded. DOW reviews the existing Water Plan every year and add projects as needed. When they update it next, it will incorporate GP growth areas and the Water Use and Development Plan.
- We need to better understand the relationship between available public and private funding.
- What about demand side management and conservation measures? How are these factored into the projections?
- We may have preferred growth areas, but what about the already entitled projects? If we add up all that is already on the books, we are already short of capacity.
- There are a lot of major infrastructure issues coming to a head right now on the island. The land fill, the wastewater treatment plan, the roads – all are urgent, and all are extremely costly. Meanwhile, State and federal funds are being reduced. All of these improvements will require more funds, and also more staff to monitor them. Is this funding available, and what happens if a major recession, hurricane, or other event hits that impairs Kaua'i's ability to repay the debt? Who will be left holding the bag?

- A (Kirk): There was a consent decree by the State Drinking Water Revolving Fund that lowered their interest rates. There should be enough funding through this source to meet DOW project needs through 2035.
- A (Lyle): There is a wastewater revolving fund. However, we are the smallest County in the state, and we barely get our fair share. What we get are low interest loans, on a project by project basis, subject to availability. In the last six years, facilities have been upgraded to the standard that were applicable then. However, since then, new EPA requirements have been imposed, and there is currently no technology available to meet their criteria, so now we have hired a consultant to focus on that.
- A (Lyle): In the absence of major development to help share costs of infrastructure, we rely on the State Revolving Fund. There is not enough of a tax base to pay for improvements that way. Developers can help quite a bit – in Līhu'e, it enabled us to get R-1 water for irrigation and other uses.
- The landfill definitely needs to be dealt with. It cannot be put off any longer.
 - A (Lyle): The EIS for the landfill is underway, and is about two-thirds complete. If all goes well, it should be released by end of 2016.
- Is waste to energy a dead issue? It's not easy, but could be a solution for sustainability.
- A (Lyle): No. I cannot speak further about it as there is an RFP out.

Discussion Question 3: *What should change in current practice to move the County toward a more sustainable system?*

- Is rainwater catchment legal on Kaua'i? Could help with sustainability.
 - A (Kirk): I think rain barrels for gardening are probably not an issue. If anything, catchment for drinking water may be regulated by the State Department of Health. And anything that connects to the DOW system would be regulated, since we cannot guarantee its quality.
- Rainfall may be decreasing with climate change.
- Do you lose your water meter if you put in a catchment system? You do if you put in a well.
 - A: The team will look into this.
- We need to take a look at incentives for conservation, and not only monetary ones. That's not the only kind of incentive that works.
- We are losing our irrigation infrastructure (ditches, tunnels, reservoirs), but the County water system cannot accommodate Ag needs. It would tax the system and be too expensive for farmers anyway. In addition, agricultural uses affect the percolation rate into reservoirs, and therefore our sustainable yield. Considering the costs associated with repairing and maintaining our irrigation infrastructure, is it really fair or realistic to promote Agriculture as a large part of the GP Update?
 - A (Kirk): This is certainly an issue, especially on the North and Northeast sides. The systems owned by Grove Farm and on the West Side have been better maintained. The

County's Ag rate for water is not affordable for most farmers, and the cost of rehabilitating these systems is great.

- The GP should definitely address the fact that the responsibility of maintaining these systems that the County relies on to service Ag lands rests with private landowners.
- There are Water Cooperatives in both West and East Kaua'i that are working on these issues. The State is in the process of decommissioning the reservoirs that are on State land.
- Some legislative funding has been allocated to a project in Moloaa, but it may not have been released.
- With all these infrastructure issues coming to a head, combined with the declining growth rates in both population and tourism, that paints a scary picture for our future. It is a red flag that tells me we need to move past the "business as usual" approach and look at implementing conservation and demand side management across the board. That includes grey water and other recycled water uses. It's really scary that water use per capita increased 50% over a period of 15 years.

Discussion Question 4: *Is the information in the Infrastructure Map helpful? How could it be used and improved upon?*

- *Should the General Plan have an additional map showing which critical infrastructures are in vulnerable areas or impacted by sea level rise?*
 - YES! (All)
 - To the extent possible, the GP should map or explain progressive impacts of SLR – meaning what it will look like in 2020, 2030, etc.
 - The maps should include the revised flood zones (ask Elton Ushio).

Discussion Question 5: *Discuss possible County policies for wastewater. Should specific (new) policies be given in the General Plan or in future Infrastructure plans for:*

- *County funded WWTP*
- *Cesspools*
- *Private systems*
- *Recycled water*
- Cesspools are mostly a State issue, so the GP has limited authority. However, it would be good if the GP can urge the State to approve more creative systems that can provide alternatives to the traditional septic tank and leach field. That gets expensive and space-intensive.
- Currently, cesspools are not allowed in new development.
- The GP should mention cesspools, but explain that it's a State issue and therefore outside the scope.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

M.D.:

I extend respect to the committee and their work. I was unable to testify at the last meeting due to time, and that was upsetting. Here are my comments:

- Make sure the developer pays for ALL infrastructure requirements. Citizens should not have to pay.
- Sustainability means accommodating all. Need to change zoning laws to allow very small dwellings to accommodate workers. A building does not have to be even 500 SF to accommodate 1-2 people's needs.
- On demand hot water heaters, and composting toilets should be legal.
- Cesspools should be grandfathered forever unless they are in proximity to ocean or streams. People can't afford to change to a septic at point of sale.
- Lots of wealth moves here, but the County needs to care for all people regardless of their income level and needs.
- Grey water and catchment systems are legal in state, and should be encouraged.
- Solid waste policy should encourage people to reduce consumption.
- Encourage collecting rainwater for irrigation.
- Why was there no district community meeting in Puna moku?
- Government corruption has caused many of these problems, so how can we solve these problems if things don't change at the government level?

K.T. (provided handouts, see Written Comments Section):

- A 2006 press release from Mayor Baptiste said developers should pay for infrastructure, we are not doing a great job with following up on that.
- Cost of growth handout - 2001. Says building a new house requires \$20-30k in public infrastructure, but in today's dollars that's more like \$50-60k.
- The handouts include a map of infrastructure that wasn't included in today's discussion.
- Quality of life taxes should be added to every new development.
- Other handouts include Myths about growth, and a cartoon about the economic growth cliff that would happen with unchecked growth.
- We are beyond carrying capacity, and none of this is sustainable.

J.Y.

- There are two APA publications that I would like to see used to inform this GP Update:
 - Sustaining places: best practices for comprehensive plans
 - The role of the comprehensive plan in sustainability
- Infrastructure should be focused on preferred growth areas.
- Compact growth areas are sustainable and fiscally responsible.
- Developers should be required to develop within preferred growth areas and pay for their share of costs, which they are not doing to an adequate level now.

- Infrastructure should give preference to affordable housing that is within the preferred growth areas. We should not support affordable housing outside the preferred areas.
- The GP should articulate a clear statement about allocating investment and resources for people who live here, rather than second homeowners.
- Adopt zero waste facilities with reduce/reuse/recycle as best practices, including a materials recycling facility. Waste to energy is not a best practice.
- Adopt practices that lower VMT (vehicle miles traveled) across the board.

WRITTEN COMMENTS:

S.K. – Infrastructure Assessment (Draft Report) 2/3/16, Table 8: State Parks on Kaua'i. Wailua State Park is listed as East Kaua'i (not Lihu'e). To say there are no State Parks in East Kaua'i is not a true statement.

L.H. – Thank you for the re-cap! Setting the "context". I appreciate that. Good job on focus on youth, I liked that youth summary a lot! Mahalo!

- Table 3 Column 7: includes well and surface water production
- What was Sue's question? Not reflecting true visitor counts.
- Luke's calculations on page 15 of infrastructure assessment – SSFM and Department of Planning tried to explain not a direct calculation, taken from DBEDT
- Public schools: Where's KCC? Page 34
- Overlay maps only work if maps are all the same "Scale" – stating the obvious :-)
- Infrastructure maps/PPT slides 2035 adequacy projections: Do wastewater forecasts include anticipated conversion from cesspool to septic system, or tying into a sewage system?
- Preferred "growth" areas.
 - Visitor Destination Area = Poipu = development of a regional sewage plant
 - "Affordable houses" in preferred growth area
- Page 13, Column (a) – Supply deficiency 2000 for Lihu'e is 1,730 gpm. Is this true?
- Page 12: "Incentives" name other incentives.
- Waita – largest surface water source in the State of Hawai'i.
- Cesspools going out! Only an issue if private cesspools plan to connect into County sewage system.
- Infrastructure: WHO will pay for these requirements?

B.R. –

1) Hanalei Map:

- No Wainiha Power Plant shown
- Transfer stations, etc shown in Hanalei, but they are in Princeville

2) Hanalei is a VILLAGE not a Town

- CDP population in 2010 = 450
- DCP population for Kilauea Village has 2,800 people

- 3) Explain the difference between a District and a Planning Area. Are the boundaries the same? [See Infrastructure report p.7 vs p. 14 as example]
- 4) Our CAC doesn't have enough time to ask questions, discuss issues, give opinions, etc.

NEXT ACTIVITIES:

CAC Meeting #10

Topic: Tourism

Date/Time: February 29, 2:30-5:00 pm

Venue: Moikeha Building Room 2A & 2B, Planning Commission Room

CAC Meeting #11

Topic: Transportation

Date/Time: March 14, 2:30-5:00 pm

Venue: Moikeha Building Room 2A & 2B, Planning Commission Room

Save the Date: CAC Health in Comprehensive Plans Workshop

(CAC Members Only, sponsored by Get Fit Kaua'i)

March 31, 2016, 8-11 am at the Courtyard Marriott in Kapa'a

From: KEO TAYLOR
Feb 16, 2016

Mayor Bryan Baptiste Press Release

18 May 2006 - 9:30pm

by Kauai Mayor Bryan Baptiste on 16 May 2006

The cost of doing business has gone way up over the last 13 years.

Correspondingly, impact fees have at least doubled since 1993.

Now impacts are greater than they have ever been, and there's little money to pay for them.

I believe that any developer that comes before the Planning Commission today must offer enough benefit for the 64,000 people that live here in order to gain approval for the project – infrastructure improvements (road, water and wastewater), along with affordable housing and economic opportunity.

Benefits must outweigh the impacts that residents have to endure. We must put the needs of Kaua'i's people first.

As presented, I don't think the two proposed Waipouli developments are good for Kaua'i:

- a) ***Neither is planned for residents.*** One is a luxury condominium with a starting price of \$1 million per unit and the other is a timeshare.
- b) They would be located next to a corridor with terrible traffic problems.
- c) Without infrastructure improvements, these developments would place undue burden on the area.

While it's true they would provide us with an increased tax base that would be designated for future improvements, not catch-up or the impact of the developments.

Who's going to pay for catch-up – developers or the general public? Projects must provide benefit to the 64,000 people that live here. We must put the needs of Kaua'i's people first.

Kauai County Mayor:
Bryan J. Baptiste
4444 Rice St, Suite 235
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From: KEN TAYLOR
Feb. 16, 2016

A Commentary...

"Once upon a time there was a mountain peak with a wonderful view, so that people came from all over to stand on top of the mountain and look out. The village at the foot of the mountain charged a dollar a head to all tourists. But so few of them could stand on top of the mountain at the same time, they leveled the top of the mountain to provide more room and increase the take. This seemed to work, so they kept enlarging the area on top of the mountain. Finally they had a place up there that would accommodate ten thousand people, but by then the mountain was only forty feet high, and suddenly everybody stopped coming to see the view. This convinced them people were tired of views, so in the name of Progress and a Tourist Economy, they turned the flattened mountain into a carnival area, and every night you could see the lights and hear the music for miles around. They still attracted customers, but it was the kind of people who like carnivals instead of the kind of people who like beauty."

John D. MacDonald
"A Flash Of Green"

From: KEN TAYLOR
Sept. 29, 2015

The Cost of GROWTH

1 Each new single-family house built requires \$20,000 to \$30,000 or more in public infrastructure to provide water, sewers, storm drainage, roads, fire stations, schools, libraries and other community facilities.

2 Urban development in North America has covered more land in the last 50 years than in all previous history.

3 Urban sprawl in the U.S. is consuming 2.2 million acres of land per year or 256 acres of land every hour.* At this rate, new development is covering an area equivalent in size to the state of Indiana every 10 years.

4 Almost half of the land being developed is farmland (cropland or pastureland).

5 Between 1970 and 1990 the population of the U.S. increased at a rate of about 1% a year. But the number of housing units increased at twice that rate – about 2% a year.

6 Between 1970 and 1990 the size of the average new home increased from 1,500 square feet to more than 2,000 square feet while the average number of persons in each house declined from 3.1 to 2.6. # From 1969 to 1990, the number of vehicles increased 6 times faster than the U.S. population. 25% or more of urban land area is devoted to auto travel.

7 The average North American citizen consumes 5 times more resources than the average world citizen.

8 On average, each North American requires 11 to 13 acres of ecologically productive land to supply his/her current consumption levels. By contrast the average resident of India has an "ecological footprint" of only 1 acre.

9 If everyone on Earth had the same levels of consumption as North Americans, we would need 3 planets to satisfy our demands. # In the U.S., we have lost 95% of our old-growth forests, 55% of our wetlands, and 99% of our native prairies.

Above From the book "Better, Not Bigger" by Eben Fodor * Updated 1/17/01

The Ecological Footprint of one person traveling 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) twice each workday varies according to transportation mode: for bicycle, it is about 122 sq. meters (1313.1 sq. ft.), for buses 301 sq. meters (3239.9 sq. ft), and for cars 1442 sq. meters (15,521 sq. ft.)



The Ecological Footprint is a measure of the "load" imposed by a given population on nature. It represents the land area necessary to sustain current levels of resource consumption and waste discharge by that population.

Feb. 16, 2016

Creating the infrastructure on Kauai to support and promote healthy, livable and active communities. With a emphasis on self-sufficiency.

Just remember Murrow's words, (Edward R. Murrow, Am. Journalist, 1908-1965) "The obscure we see eventually. The completely obvious, it seems, takes a little longer." Well, we have waited too long already, so let's design and build a "Self-sufficient and Sustainable Kauai" for the people of Kauai. And yes, we not only can be a model for the rest of the state, country and the world, we SHOULD BE, we owe it to our children and future generations!

The Maverick

Ken T.

From: KEN TAYLOR
Feb 16, 2016



The Other Infrastructure

From: KEN TAYLOR
Feb. 16, 2016

QUALITY OF LIFE* TAXES

Costs that should be added to all new units of construction

Non-point runoff pollution tax	\$ 1187
Land-use degradation tax	1265
Urban sprawl inside urban area	350
Urban sprawl outside urban area	4550
Resource extraction pollution tax	2166
Embodied energy pollution tax	961
Respiratory illness compensation fund	659
Acid rain tax	1280
Subsidized parking offset charge	3090
Global warming tax	934
Recycling surcharge	2227
Biodiversity loss surcharge inside urban area	350
Biodiversity loss surcharge outside urban area	2110
Resource depletion surcharge	1800

* Quality of life individually or collectively, is measured by the psychological well-being and by the well-being of the whole biotic community.

From KEN TAYLOR
Feb 16, 2016

Eben Fodor's Twelve Big Myths About Growth

by Donella H. Meadows

"We need to bring in business to bring down taxes. This development will give us jobs. Environmental protection will hurt the economy. Growth is good for us."

If we've heard those arguments once, we've heard them a thousand times, stated with utmost certainty and without slightest evidence. That's because there is no evidence. Or rather, there is plenty of evidence, most of which disproves deeply held pro-growth beliefs.

Here is a short summary of some of the evidence. For more, see Eben Fodor's new book *Better, Not Bigger* which lists and debunks the following **Twelve Big Myths of Growth**.

Myth 1: Growth provides needed tax revenues. Check out the tax rates of cities larger than yours. There are a few exceptions but the general rule is: the larger the city, the higher the taxes. That's because development requires water, sewage treatment, road maintenance, police and fire protection, garbage pickup—a host of public services. Almost never do the new taxes cover the new costs. Fodor says: "The bottom line on urban growth is that it rarely pays its own way."

Myth 2: We have to grow to provide jobs. But there's no guarantee that new jobs will go to local folks. In fact they rarely do. If you compare the 25 fastest growing cities in the U.S. to the 25 slowest growing, you find no significant difference in unemployment rates. Says Fodor: "Creating more local jobs ends up attracting more people, who require more jobs." And services.

Myth 3: We must stimulate and subsidize business growth to have good jobs. A "good business climate" is one with little regulation, low business taxes, and various public subsidies to business. A study of areas with good and bad business climates (as ranked by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the business press) showed that states with the best business ratings actually have lower growth in per capita incomes than those with the worst. Fodor: "This surprising outcome may be due to the emphasis placed by good-business-climate states on investing resources in businesses rather than directly in people."

Myth 4: If we try to limit growth, housing prices will shoot up. Sounds logical, but it isn't so. A 1992 study of 14 California cities, half with strong growth controls, half with none, showed no difference in average housing prices. Some of the cities with strong growth controls had the most affordable housing, because they had active low-cost housing programs. Fodor says the important factor in housing affordability is not so much house cost as income level, so development that provides mainly low-paying retail jobs makes housing unaffordable.

Myth 5: Environmental protection hurts the economy. According to a Bank of America study the economies of states with high environmental standards grew consistently faster than those with weak regulations. The Institute of Southern Studies ranked all states according to 20 indicators of economic prosperity (gold) and environmental health (green) and found that they rise and fall together. Vermont ranked 3rd on the gold scale and first on the green; Louisiana ranked 50th on both.

Myth 6: Growth is inevitable. There are constitutional limits to the ability of any community to put walls around itself. But dozens of municipalities have capped their population size or rate of growth by legal regulations based on real environmental limits and the real costs of growth to the community.

Myth 7: If you don't like growth, you're a NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) or an ANTI (against everything) or a gangplank-puller (right after you get aboard). These accusations are meant more to shut people up than to examine their real motives. Says Fodor: "A NIMBY is more likely to be someone who cares enough about the future of his or her community to get out and protect it."

Myth 8: Most people don't support environmental protection. Polls and surveys have disproved this belief for decades; Fodor cites examples from Oregon, Los Angeles, Colorado, and the U.S. as a whole. The fraction of respondents who say environmental quality is more important than further economic growth almost always tops 70 percent.

Myth 9: We have to grow or die. This statement is tossed around lightly and often, but if you hold it still and look at it, you wonder what it means. Fodor points out, quoting several economic studies, that many kinds of growth cost more than the benefits they bring. So the more growth, the poorer we get. That kind of growth will kill us.

Myth 10: Vacant land is just going to waste. Studies from all over show that open land pays far more - often twice as much - in property taxes than it costs in services. Cows don't put their kids in school; trees don't put potholes in the roads. Open land absorbs floods, recharges aquifers, cleans the air, harbors wildlife, and measurably increases the value of property nearby. We should value and pay for it to be there.

Myth 11: Beauty is no basis for policy. One of the saddest things about municipal meetings is their tendency to trivialize people who complain that a proposed development will be ugly. Dollars are not necessarily more real or important than beauty. In fact beauty can translate directly into dollars. For starters, undeveloped surroundings can add \$100,000 to the price of a home.

Myth 12: Environmentalists are just another special interest. A developer who will directly profit from a project is a special interest. A citizen with no financial stake is fighting for the public interest, the long term, the good of the whole community.

Maybe one reason these myths are proclaimed so often and loudly is that they are so obviously doubtful. The only reason to keep repeating something over and over is to keep others from thinking about it. You don't have to keep telling people that the sun rises in the east.

From KEN TAYLOR
Feb. 16, 2016

