



OTOC's Metro Area Development Committee Invites You To

“The World of Development”

**Thursday, May 23, 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM – First United Methodist Church
Ada Mead Hall - 69th & Cass (west side of church complex)**

For more information call Michele Jarzynka (558-8116) or Clyde Anderson (932-7225)
Admission is free. Please RSVP so we'll have enough pizza & drinks for everyone.

History Omaha Together One Community's Metro Area Development Committee has been studying the problem of uncontrolled development and sprawl in the Omaha metro area since last summer. Now we are ready to share our knowledge with members of our organizations to build a constituency that will support sound development and speak out against projects that aren't consistent with Omaha's and Sarpy County's Master Plans.

Some would say Omaha doesn't have an urban sprawl problem. Others disagree.

What's the reality? Omaha can control development within three miles of its boundaries, and it can annex adjacent communities up to a population of 10,000 as long as they are in Douglas County. Unlike some other metropolitan areas, development in Douglas County is generally contiguous with a minimal number of governmental jurisdictions.

However, from a land-use viewpoint, the City of Omaha provides a classic example of urban sprawl. During the 40-year period between 1960 and 2000 Omaha's population grew by 29%, but during the same period the City's land area more than doubled -- from 50.83 sq. mi. in 1960 to 118.88 sq. mi. in 2000, an increase of 134%. **As a result of this dispersion, the population density dropped 45%.** (See Exhibit 1 on reverse side.) The dispersion of urban population not only consumes vast amounts of rural farmland, green space and wetlands, it causes an increase in the individual taxpayer's burden to pay for streets, sewers, and other infrastructure and public services.

How much does lower population density cost us? Omaha has an average residential density of 3.4 units/acre. At this density, a population of 12,000 occupies 2.25 square miles, and it takes about 2 miles of streets to serve this population. Much of the new residential growth outside Omaha is at a density of one residential unit per acre or less. It takes 7.65 sq. mi to support a population of 12,000 at one unit/acre with 9.65 miles of streets. See Exhibit 2.

A mile of new 25-foot wide residential street costs about \$735,000. Streets for a neighborhood of one-acre estates housing a population of 12,000 would cost over \$7 million compared to just \$735,000 for the one mile of streets to serve the same population at an urban density of 7 units per acre. Apply this cost difference to all public utilities and services, and the added cost of sprawl is huge!

Exhibit 1.

Year	City Land Area (square miles)	City of Omaha Population	Population Density (per square mile)
1960	50.83	301,598	5,933
2000	118.88	390,007	3,281
Change	68.05	88,409	-2,653
Percent Change	134%	29%	-45%

Exhibit 2.

Land Consumption and Infrastructure Requirements at Different Population Densities

Population Density*		Land Area to Support 12,000 People	Example Neighborhood	Miles of Streets Required#
Urban@	7 units/acre@	1.09 sq. miles	Dundee-East of 50th	1 mile
Suburban	3.4 units/acre	2.25 sq. miles	Maple Hill (Omaha average)	2.25 miles
1 Acre Lots	1 unit/acre	7.65 sq. miles	Linden Estates	9.65 miles
5 Acre Lots	0.3 units/acre	38.2 sq. miles	Common min. for septic service	38.2 miles
10 Acre Lots	0.1 units/acre	76.53 sq. miles	Unregulated rural development	76.53 miles

* - Residential density only

- Relationship also pertains to other utilities, e.g. water sewers, power lines, etc.

@ - 7 units/acre is considered minimum density to support mass transit.

What about Sarpy County? Is it true that it is a Developers’ Paradise? Growth in Sarpy County illustrates the need for regional planning in the metro area. Although we expected to find Sarpy communities concerned about Omaha dominating plans for growth, instead Bellevue, Papillion, LaVista, Springfield, Gretna, and the County government are all competing for development and disputing among themselves over annexation of unincorporated areas. Thus developers can exert considerable power by playing one community against another. Control over development is very difficult at this time in Sarpy County.

Doesn’t Omaha have a good Master Plan? Despite the existence of Omaha’s Master Plan approved in January 1997, the City does little to curb developers’ projects that continue this pattern of dispersion. The Master Plan has the following goals for managing growth:

- Be pro-active rather than reactive regarding development
- Establish a contiguous and compact pattern of growth
- Prevent new strip office/commercial development
- Create a series of high-density, mixed-use areas throughout the city
- Increase the City’s market share of the metropolitan growth
- Evaluate and create fiscal policies which adequately manage the growth of the city.

What can we do? Attend our “World of Development” workshop on Thursday, May 23, 5:30 PM at First United Methodist Church, 69th & Cass, in the Ada Mead Hall. Learn how development takes place today, the need for regional planning, and why we as citizens must take action to encourage smart growth and conformance with our master plans.