

Quality Growth Tools For Use In Coastal Areas

The tools listed below are only a fraction of the quality growth / smart growth tools available to coastal communities. These tools have both direct (red font) and indirect (blue font) uses in the Coastal environment, when used properly these tools can assist local governments in resolving growth pressures by steering development to proper location with necessary densities and amenities while assisting local governments in preserving and restoring the natural environment

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For customization of these tools for your community,
please contact the Regional Programs Staff at the email above

Please use CTRL + click on the tool name to be directed to DCA Toolkit Item

Tool
Adaptive Use Adaptive use is the conversion of a disused building, usually abandoned and/or historic, into a functional building with a new use. This is often a better practice than demolishing buildings in order to build brand-new ones, but sometimes it needs to be encouraged by tax breaks, code changes, or other regulatory means. Adaptive use can be especially valuable for popular historic buildings, but it is also an important tool for regenerating deteriorating areas.
Bicycle Facility Specifications (DCA Model Code 2-6) Ensures safe, adequate and well-designed facilities are provided for bicyclists, including pavement markings, signage, and intersection crossings.
Cluster Development Commercial, residential or mixed-use developments in which a significant portion of the site is set aside as undivided, permanently protected open space, while the buildings (houses, shops, etc.) are clustered on the remainder of the property.
Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) A Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is a contract between a developer and a coalition that represents various stakeholders in a community. Such stakeholders often include neighborhood groups, unions, faith-based organizations, advocacy groups and charities. In return for being able to build in the community, the developer agrees to provide benefits such as living wages, local hiring and/or training, affordable housing, park or recreation areas, environmental improvements, and other community services, facilities or amenities.
Conservation Easements An arrangement where private landowners donate the development rights of their property to a qualified conservation organization or government agency, in exchange for tax savings. This permanently protects the property from development and thereby ensures that it remains as open space or farmland.
Conservation Subdivision Ordinance Conservation subdivisions are residential or mixed-use developments in which a significant portion of the site is set aside as undivided, permanently protected open space, while houses are clustered on the remainder of the property. A Conservation Subdivision Ordinance authorizes the development of new conservation subdivisions on sites proposed by a developer, provided the development plans meet certain criteria specified in the ordinance.

Corridor Map (DCA Model Code 6-7)

Designates where the construction and improvement of transportation facilities is expected, indicating the right-of-way of planned transportation facilities.

Corridor Study

A study to identify and plan for improvement needs along a strip commercial corridor. The study typically involves key stakeholders (property owners, businesses, neighborhood leaders, service providers) to achieve consensus on improvements to be made along the corridor.

Design Guidelines (DCA Model Code 5-3)

Evaluates the appropriateness of buildings, properties, and land uses to create an architecturally and physically cohesive area of specified character.

Development Agreement (DCA Model Code 6-3)

A negotiated agreement between a local government and a developer that sets out the regulations that will apply to a phased development over time.

Development Performance Standards (DCA Model Code 3-2)

Establishes minimum criteria for assessing whether a particular project is appropriate for a certain area in terms of its impact upon, and compatibility with, surrounding land uses. For example, performance standards might seek to reduce traffic impacts instead of restricting the type of land use for a particular site. (This is sometimes known as "performance zoning.")

Education/Marketing Campaign for Quality Growth

An effort to convince the general public or certain key stakeholders of the benefits of various quality growth best practices. A strong public education campaign can reduce potential opposition and help dispel commonly held misconceptions about particular quality growth practices. For example, encouraging mixed income housing may be viewed as bringing the poor or transients into a neighborhood, but an education and marketing effort could highlight mixed-income neighborhoods that are very successful.

Environmental Impact Review (DCA Model Code 6-5)

Allows local governmental agencies to consider the environmental consequences of projects via the preparation of a document called an environmental checklist.

Environmental Regulations (DCA Model Code 2-1)

Designed to implement the state Department of Natural Resources' Environmental Planning Criteria. (Rule 391-3-16-.02, also known as "Part V" standards)

Environmental Resource Inventory

Comprehensive mapping of the community's environmentally sensitive areas (such as floodplains or steep slopes) in order to make rational decisions about areas best suited to be set aside as open space. This should be the first step in crafting a local strategy for open space preservation.

Flexible Subdivision Regulations

Revising subdivision regulations to enable development of more innovative types of subdivisions that better match the character of the community and physical constraints of the development site. Revisions may include adjusting specific physical development standards or encouraging greater use of discretionary site plan review for new subdivisions.

Form-Based Codes (DCA Model Code 5-6)

Form-based zoning is an emerging land development regulatory tool that is being implemented by a small but increasing number of local governments. Form-based codes rely on the principle that design is more important than land use. Rather than regulate by zoning (use) districts, form-based codes regulate development by building type, street type, location (character area), or transect (ecozone), or a combination of some or all of these. Form-based codes rely on a "regulating plan" which consists of a map that usually sets forth geographic divisions of the community (i.e., character areas) and which often specifies on the map itself some of the desired development conditions (e.g., build-to lines).

Heritage Preservation Programs

Ensure the protection and preservation of a community's collective heritage. Programs may help to preserve historic properties, architecture, monuments, etc.

Historic Preservation (DCA Model Code 5-4)

Provides for protection and enhancement of places, districts, sites, buildings, structures, and works of art having a special historic, cultural, or aesthetic interest or value.

Impact Fees

Impact fees, formally known in Georgia as "development impact fees," are one-time fees charged to new developments, and are meant to cover part of the cost of providing the public facilities that support these developments. Such facilities include infrastructure such as water, sewer and roads, and services such as police, EMS, libraries and parks. If properly applied, impact fees can encourage infill development while discouraging scattered leap-frog development.

Incentive Zoning

Incentive zoning is the practice of granting developers extra elements they want (most often density increases) in exchange for the provision of amenities such as affordable housing units, public spaces, infrastructural improvements, or greenspace. When a density increase is allowed, this is often known as a "density bonus."

Infill Development Program

A comprehensive strategy for encouraging infill development in particular areas of the community, while also regulating this development to ensure protection of quality of life in affected neighborhoods. An effective program will include both: a) development incentives, improvements to public facilities and services, and streamlined regulations to encourage infill development; b) guidelines for appropriate design, density and location of new infill projects.

Intergovernmental Service Agreement (DCA Model Code 7-5)

Provisions for cities and counties to share resources in the areas of planning, land use regulation, building inspection, and code enforcement.

Interim Development Regulations (DCA Model Code 6-8)

Tools to ensure that urban fringe lands can be developed at urban densities later, even if they might be developed in the "interim" for lower-density residential uses. (Interim development regulations can also be used for other purposes, such as environmental conservation.)

Land Trust

A land trust is a nonprofit organization that works to protect unspoiled natural areas. Land trusts may purchase land, accept donations of land, create conservation easements, or carry out other activities related to protecting land. They often work together with land owners or local governments. There are various tax advantages associated with giving land (or easements) to land trusts. There are about 1,500 land trusts across the U.S.

Land Use Guidance (Point) System (DCA Model Code 6-6)

A simple rating system, usually using "points" or "values" to rate proposed projects, that can be used as a growth management tool. This system is sometimes implemented in rural areas that need some form of limited planning but do not want standard zoning

regulations. In other cases, in areas that wish to have more sophisticated growth controls, the system is used as a supplement to zoning.

Land Use Intensity Districts (DCA Model Code 6-1)

Zoning-like districts designed to discourage new development that would create excessive costs or incompatibility with existing uses.

Land Value Taxation

Land Value Taxation (LVT) is a form of property tax based solely on the value of the land alone, not taking into consideration improvements on the land. When LVT is used in combination with standard property taxes, the system is known as a "split-rate" or "two-rate" property tax. Any such system taxes land more heavily than the improvements (buildings, etc.) upon the land, and therefore encourages higher densities, construction in underdeveloped or neglected areas, and more efficient use of land in general.

Landscaping and Buffers (DCA Model Code 3-9)

Require planting areas to mask unattractive land uses or to provide a visual and sound barrier between incompatible adjacent uses, increase aesthetic values, and protect water and quality of rivers and streams.

Low Impact Development (LID)

Low Impact Development (LID) seeks a more environmentally-friendly way to manage stormwater, by collecting and draining or evaporating it onsite, rather than routing it into a typical stormwater collection system. LID techniques include bioretention, permeable pavers, tree box filters, rain barrels, disconnected downspouts, narrower streets, infiltration swales, rooftop meadows, bioretention cells and rain gardens.

Mandatory Conservation Subdivision Ordinance (Rural Cluster Development)

Requires all new subdivisions to be built as conservation subdivisions (instead of conventional subdivisions). Conservation subdivisions are residential or mixed-use developments in which a significant portion of the site is set aside as undivided, permanently protected open space, while houses are clustered on the remainder of the property.

Maximum Impervious Surface Coverage

Many local governments require that impervious surfaces not exceed a certain maximum percentage, calculated on the basis of the lot size. These regulations usually only apply to residential lots. Limiting impervious surfaces is important in water supply watersheds and other environmentally sensitive areas, but it can also be used simply to reduce the strain on the stormwater management system.

Mixed-Use Zoning

In contrast to traditional zoning techniques, mixed-use zoning allows different types of uses (such as housing, commercial and office) to locate within the same area, provided the uses are reasonably compatible. This creates a more diverse and dynamic urban setting, and makes it easier for people to carry out some daily activities by walking. Mixed-use zoning is often accomplished through zoning overlays.

Overlay Districts

A mapped area where special regulations on development are applied. An overlay is typically superimposed over conventional zoning districts, but may also be used as stand-alone regulations to manage development in desired areas of the community.

Park Creation and Financing

As cities expand, it is important to create new parks, greenspace, greenways and open space. Otherwise there will actually be less parkland in new suburbs than in older urban areas. Furthermore, quality of life has become more and more important to people, and parks and open space are a major consideration in that. Progressive cities and towns are realizing the importance of parkland, and finding innovative ways to finance it.

Pervious Paving

There are various pervious paving systems, such as pervious concrete, certain brick pavers, and plastic "geo-tech" fabrics, which all allow stormwater to drain through them. Pervious paving is suitable for sidewalks, parking lots and minor streets, and costs only a bit more than normal paving. Their use decreases the load on stormwater systems, and also reduces pollution from runoff.

Planned Unit Developments

Revising land development regulations to encourage developers to propose planned, mixed-use developments for sites they choose in the community. Developer's plans are approved only if they meet specified community standards.

Purchase of Development Rights

A purchase of development rights is an arrangement whereby private landowners sell the development rights of their property to a qualified conservation organization or government agency, in order to permanently protect the property from development and thereby ensure that it remains as open space.

Rehabilitation Codes

Building codes with standards more appropriate to the renovation of older buildings. Typical building codes were written with new construction in mind, and strict application of these codes to older buildings will significantly increase renovation costs. Rehabilitation codes (sometimes known as "smart codes") help keep costs down, thereby encouraging rehabilitation of older properties.

Residential Infill Development (DCA Model Code 3-10)

Ensures that new infill development is compatible with its neighborhood, maintains harmony and character of existing residential areas, and that development occurs in an orderly and desirable manner.

Riparian Buffers

Requires narrow strips of land (from 25 to 150 feet in width) along both banks of streams and rivers be set-aside from development and left in their undisturbed, natural state as a vegetative barrier. These buffers help protect water quality by slowing and filtering stormwater runoff as it flows toward the stream.

Rural Clustering (DCA Model Code 4-7)

Provides for small lot residential development in agricultural, forestry, and rural residential districts.

Rural/Suburban Arterial Corridor Overlay (DCA Model Code 4-9)

Establishes an amenity zone adjacent to arterial corridors to provide for sidewalks and other enhancements, and to manage development so as to avoid a strip commercial pattern.

Scenic Byway Designation

Designates segments of scenic rural highway for special protection measures. These measures may include litter control, sign regulations, design guidelines, land use controls or similar measures intended to maintain the attractiveness and rural character of the roadway. The protection measures are spelled out in a corridor management plan that must be approved by the State Department of Transportation.

Scenic Corridor Overlay District (DCA Model Code 4-8)

Protects scenic views by requiring land uses to complement rather than detract from scenic experience.

Septic Area Development Regulations

Use of land use regulations (such as zoning) or health department requirements to control the overall density of development that uses septic systems. This helps ensure that the number of septic systems is limited in areas where they will not work effectively due to soil characteristics, high groundwater levels, or other environmental factors.

Septic System Installation Requirements

Mandates minimum specifications for septic system installation and procedures for choosing the best location of the septic system. Proper siting and installation is necessary for septic systems to function properly so that unacceptable environmental consequences are avoided.

Septic System Monitoring

A program of educating property owners and/or enforcing minimum requirements for the monitoring and maintenance of existing septic systems. This helps reduce the number of system failures and the unacceptable environmental consequences that result.

Smart Growth Audit

A comprehensive study to identify local development requirements that should be changed to enable smart growth development. Involves a comparison of a community's existing development regulations with commonly recognized best practices for smart growth.

Strategic Location of Public Facilities

Being strategic in locating public facilities, or coordinating with other public agencies that build facilities in the community, to help ensure that these facilities contribute to achieving the community's desired development patterns.

Subdivision Exactions

A subdivision exaction is an agreement that the developer will dedicate land for a public use. Traditionally such exactions have been used for streets and utility right-of-ways, but they may also be used for parks, recreation areas, trailways, public transit stations, school sites, coastal access, and other purposes. For these additional amenities, payments are often accepted in lieu of land. (The term "exactions" is often used more generally to refer to various fees or obligations imposed on developers or businesses, including impact fees.)

Subdivision Improvement Requirements (DCA Model Code 2-3)

Establishes minimum design requirements, standards, and specifications for improvements within subdivisions. These include sidewalks, curbs and gutters, and street lighting improvements.

Subdivisions and Land Development (DCA Model Code 2-2)

Provides for the regulation of subdivision plats and land developments. There is probably no other regulation more important than subdivision regulations, because the resulting designs and patterns of land subdivision establish the geography and geometry of the community and in turn influence the entire character of the city or county.

Tax Allocation District (TAD)

A tax allocation district (TAD) is a designated area in which improvements, usually related to infrastructure or environmental problems, are carried out by a local government in order to make a site a valid location for a project that developers would be interested in. The local government usually issues bonds to pay for the improvements, and the added tax revenues that the project eventually generates are used to pay off the bonds. This technique, known as tax increment financing (TIF), has been widely used around the U.S. The term "tax allocation district," however, is specific to Georgia.

Traditional Neighborhood Development - Comprehensive TND Ordinance

Involves comprehensive rewrite of the local development regulations to require all new developments to incorporate TND principles. TND's typically include small lot single-family homes, multi-family residences, and neighborhood commercial developments, all within easy walking distance of one another.

Traditional Neighborhood Development - Floating Districts

Enables building of new TND developments at particular locations proposed by a developer, provided these locations meet certain criteria specified in the ordinance. TND's typically include small lot single-family homes, multi-family residences, and neighborhood commercial developments, all within easy walking distance of one another.

Traditional Neighborhood Development - Site Specific Requirements

Requires new TND developments at particular locations determined by the local government. TND's typically include small lot single-family homes, multi-family residences, and neighborhood commercial developments, all within easy walking distance of one another.

Traffic Calming

Physical improvements designed to decrease traffic speed and increase the pedestrian-friendliness of roadways. Typical traffic-calming improvements include raised crosswalks, narrower traffic lanes, fewer lanes, on-street parking, bump-outs, pedestrian refuges, and landscaped medians.

Traffic Impact Studies (DCA Model Code 7-6)

Studies that enable local governments to determine the transportation demands of development proposals and provide for reduction of adverse impacts on the transportation system.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

A transfer of development rights (TDR) enables landowners in an area planned to remain as open space to sell their property development rights for use in other "receiving" areas of the community where higher density development is acceptable or desirable. Buying these additional development rights allows developers in the "receiving" areas to build at a higher density than would otherwise be allowed.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Transportation Demand Management (TDM), also known as Travel Demand Management, refers to various practices that reduce the "demand" that drivers place on road systems. In other words, TDM lowers the number of automobiles on the streets. TDM practices include carpooling and vanpooling, transit pass subsidies, congestion pricing, alternative work schedules, and telecommuting. In some cases developers or employers that implement TDM programs are allowed to build fewer parking spaces.

Transportation Enhancement Program

Provides grant funds for alternative transportation projects, such as sidewalks, bike trails, rail depot renovations, and streetscape improvements. A diverse array of projects are eligible for funding, including those related to cultural, natural, and scenic elements of the transportation network.

Tree Protection (DCA Model Code 3-4)

Require preservation of a significant portion of the trees on a new development site, particularly the larger, more mature specimens.

Urban Growth Boundaries

Define the extent of future growth in a community by establishing a boundary within which urban types of development will be permitted. Development is restricted outside the boundary to preserve the farmland and rural character of these areas.

Urban Service Areas

Specifies the area where the local government will provide urban services, such as water supply or sewage treatment, in the future. This will encourage higher density infill development within the urban service area, while helping to maintain the rural character of areas lying outside the boundary.

Very Large Lot Zoning

Establishes zoning districts with very large minimum lot size requirements (at least 10 acres, preferably 20 acres) in order to strictly

limit development density in areas where preservation of rural character, agriculture and/or greenspace is desired.

Visualization Techniques

Visualization techniques help draw citizens into the planning process. These tools take advantage of the human capacity to process visual information quickly and efficiently, allowing citizens to experience different alternatives that are hard to comprehend when presented in raw data form. Types of techniques include visual preference surveys, computer imaging, and interactive software that allows users to "paint" their own changes to an image during public meetings.

Workforce Housing

In many communities real estate prices have become so high that even valued members of the local workforce--such as teachers, nurses, police officers and firefighters--can no longer afford to live there. Instead they must endure long commutes, and lose their sense of connection to the community they serve. Some recent efforts to provide affordable housing have focused on these groups (or more broadly on the working class and middle class), using the term "workforce housing." This agenda can have the added benefit of defusing the opposition that affordable housing proposals may otherwise face. There are many different strategies for creating or promoting workforce housing; some approaches are regulatory in nature, some are market-driven, and some rely on funding sources or tax breaks.

Stormwater (DCA Model Code 2-1 : Environmental Regulations)

The goal of Stormwater / NPDES regulations is to prevent pollution of surface waters and groundwater by stormwater runoff from new development and redevelopment projects, municipalities should develop, implement, and enforce a "post-construction program" to control post-construction stormwater runoff from these projects.

Please note the Toolkit link above will take you to the Part 5 Environmental Regulations section of the Toolkit, a new stormwater model code will be developed as part of the Coastal Plan Program.

The following links can provide more information on Stormwater, NPDES, and water quality:

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/categories.html>

http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/lid/stormwater_hg/

http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/sg_stormwater_BMP.pdf

<http://www.nrdc.org/water/pollution/storm/stoinx.asp>

<http://www.stormwatercenter.net>

http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/lid%20articles/ufc_3_210_10.pdf

http://www.uga.edu/marine_advisory/wgeducation.html