

## **Questions & Answers for Community Meetings**

### **You're taking away my property rights. Can you guarantee that this process isn't going to change my property rights?**

We have freedom of speech, but you can't yell "FIRE!" in a crowded theater because you're going to harm other people. Similarly we have property rights, and you can do whatever you want on your property, until it starts to harm someone else's rights. When you or I, or our county council, make decisions that increase everyone else's congestion, taxes, and school load we are impacting other people's property rights too. There has always been a balance in this country between rights and responsibilities, that's part of what this conversation is about.

### **Why should we take this money from the federal government? Does this grant have strings attached? It is trying to push our community towards a preordained outcome.**

The federal government is interested in sponsoring this grant because they understand that if we don't think through the development that is coming, we will need to spend more money on roads, highways (other transportation projects), and schools. I am a taxpayer, like each of you, who will eat the cost of being poorly prepared. So all levels of government are realizing that using resources more effectively is in everyone's interest.

### **Don't you have a vision of how you think we should live? Don't you want everyone to leave the suburbs and move into "dense" city apartments? This is social engineering.**

No one is here to change the way anyone lives. I value my way of life, and I love my home, and I know the community is going to grow in the years and decades ahead. This discussion is about getting real input from you and from me so that we all have a say in how our tax dollars are spent. I want to talk about how each person here wants our community to grow. That is important to me exactly because I value my way of life and totally unchecked, unprepared growth will undoubtedly hurt our community and everyone's way of life.

### **Isn't this just an attempt to force a socialist agenda on our community?**

This is an opportunity for the people who live here to decide our own future. There is no predetermined decision about how we're going to grow or what we're going to look like decades from now. But if we don't talk through how we want to grow, we're going to have a lot of problems with more traffic, congestion, over crowded schools and on and on. That will raise your taxes and mine. And I want to find a way to keep living in this great community without having to pay more taxes because we couldn't sit down and talk through this.

### **This is unconstitutional.**

This is about democracy and having a real say in the process; that's what the Founding Fathers intended. A group of citizens coming together to honestly discuss and voice an opinion about our future is what our democracy is all about. I think the Founding Fathers would applaud this kind of democratic process. (The constitution is silent on the idea of a community from coming together to decide how we want to grow.)

**What if I don't want to go along with the UN Agenda 21 plan you're trying to implement?**

This has nothing to do with UN Agenda 21. No one is telling us what to do and we're not asking for input from anyone outside our own community. This is about what we want to do, as a community, so that we grow in a way that keeps the great parts of our community in tact and we are a place that our children and grandchildren want to live.

*Emphasize local planning precedent and history, if you have a state, county or local mandate. IE. "We go through this process every 10 years, as mandated by the state legislature. You can choose not to be involved, but I know that I want a say in the issues that impact me and my family every day."*

**This is the local manifestation of the UN's Agenda 21 and ICLEI, which is all about the three Es--notice how this is all about economy, equity and environment. Do you think we should follow those principles?**

This is about what we want, what each one of us wants. If the government is going to make decisions and spend my money, I know I want to be involved in deciding how my tax dollars are spent. I don't see anyone from the UN here, I do see people I've known for years, who live here, and who are trying to figure how we can keep doing a better job for the place we live.

*Emphasize local planning precedent and history.*

**How can you say this is for our community? This will just destroy us!**

What will destroy us is if we don't have a smart plan about how to grow. This is about making strategic decisions that will maintain our quality of life and our great community. I want to make sure that people do not destroy the great place I live. This discussion will help us protect it.

**[If you received a federal grant] Why are you listening to big government tell you what to do? Isn't this just HUD/EPA giving you \$XX with strings attached so we do what they want?**

This is about what we want. If our council members are going to make decisions and spend my tax money, I know I want to be involved in deciding how my tax dollars are spent. By sitting down together to discussion this, you and I get to figure it out with our neighbors.

*Emphasize local planning precedent and history.*

**Do you believe in climate change? Are you encouraging "smart growth" so we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions?**

This discussion is about giving our community the chance to use our tax dollars more effectively. If we come up with some ideas that save us money and give a real boost to our local businesses, and greenhouse emissions are also reduced in the process- that is a good thing to me.

**If this is about reducing congestion, why don't we just widen the roads and build more highways? It's simple supply and demand.**

It has been proven time and time again that adding more lanes to a highway does nothing to improve congestion- it usually makes it worse. *[Use a local example of a road with bad traffic despite a past widening]* Making the highway bigger won't solve our problems. It has been studied and proven over and over that adding more roads doesn't reduce traffic. We need to come up with some other ideas.

**Do you think more public transportation is the answer? Because we can't afford it and it doesn't work here.**

What this is really about is having a plan that spends tax dollars wisely. It's too expensive to ignore the problems we're facing and keep doing business as usual.

**What is the definition of a sustainable community?**

An urban, suburban or rural community that has more housing and transportation choices, is closer to jobs shops or schools, is more energy independent and helps protect clean air and water. That's my definition of sustainable communities.

**Other Issues: business, conservation easements, civil war battlefields**

**Don't you see this will kill businesses? Economic activity isn't planned, it happens as a result of the private sector deciding what designs and locations work.**

Thinking through our future (sound planning) allows businesses to know what to expect and plan for their own future. We want to attract major investments and businesses to our area and we need to plan for them. I want my own neighbors to be able to start their own businesses if they want. But businesses will only want to locate and stay here if they feel confident that the community has a solid economic future. Our discussion today helps businesses know what to expect.

*[If you live in an area where this is a relevant issue]* **Civil War battlefields** are often protected by conservation easements and land trusts. There are places that have protected their battlefields and because of that, have experienced significant economic activity from tourists. Other places have ceded that battlefield ground to developers, in the process losing an important part of our heritage and losing the unique draw of a protected battlefield.

**Rich people want land to be protected with conservation easements so they can buy it cheap and not have to pay taxes on it, right?**

People who own land have the right to do with it what they want. Some landowners have decided to sell their land to developers. Lots of landowners have decided that there is value in not selling off their land to be developed, so they choose to enter into easement agreements. Taking away that right to decide what to do with your property would be wrong.

**From the Media**

**What do you think of the attempt to disrupt these forums?**

These public meetings provide an opportunity to engage and provide meaningful input into a plan that will impact all of us. As residents of [city/town] I think it's important to be involved in the future direction of our area.