Community Benefits
Through Government Policy

Larissa Brown AICP
Chief Planner
Goody Clancy
Boston, MA
Two Massachusetts examples

• Community benefits through commuter rail corridor planning in southeastern Massachusetts

• Community benefits through zoning and permitting processes in Cambridge, MA
Extending commuter rail to a fast-growing region

- Sprawling growth, both residential and commercial
- Uneven economic development
- Limited networking of environmental resources
- Loss of working landscapes
- Threats to historic and landscape character

Population Growth 1990-2006
Planning for 31 cities and towns

- State, region and communities plan for growth and preservation in advance of investment in commuter rail
  - TOD and compact development
  - Economic development opportunities
  - Open space and agricultural preservation
Partnership - State, Regional Commission, Communities

• Identify:
  - Suitable locations for compact development
  - Solutions to infrastructure deficits
  - Improvements to enhance market competitiveness

• Amend regulations to permit compact development

• Align state programs to support smart development and preservation

• Promote state-level reforms to enhance efficient land use
Opportunities

• Help revitalize economically challenged historic cities
  - Attract a more economically and educationally diverse population
  - Broaden access to jobs, higher education, cultural opportunities along the line and in Boston.

• Focus growth in compact development near train stations, town and village centers

• Preserve regional landscape character and rural activities as an economic asset to the region
Cambridge, MA: Zoning-based project review and community benefits

- Zoning Article 19 Project Review
- Developed to manage impacts and make sure projects fit into neighborhoods
- Establishes traffic and urban design standards
- Special permit required for new construction
  - 50,000 sf or more
  - Less than 50,000 sf if a use threshold is met for a traffic study
- Urban design objectives establish guidelines
- Large Project Review procedures for staff, abutters and public to review and comment on proposed projects
Elements included in review

- Traffic study
- Tree study
- Sewer and water service infrastructure
- Noise mitigation
- Urban design narrative
Urban design policy criteria

- Responsive to existing or anticipated pattern of development
- Pedestrian and bike friendliness with positive relationship to surroundings
- Mitigation of adverse impacts on neighbors (mechanicals, trash, loading, etc.)
- Infrastructure impacts
- Reinforcement and enhancement of historic patterns
- Expansion of housing inventory
- Expansion and enhancement of open space
The NorthPoint example

• 45-acre former railyard: redevelopment into new mixed use neighborhood

• New multi-modal transit station paid for by developer in public-private partnership with transit agency
  - Developer pays for cleaning and maintenance for 10 years
  - Bicycle end-of-trip facilities
The NorthPoint example

• 10 acre park
• Multi-use trail connecting to Charles River and regional trail
• Multiple architects for buildings through an international competition
Using government policy to achieve benefits

• Develop policy criteria with public process
• Give developers clear direction on requirements
• Provide for public review and comment
• Align government actions with desired outcomes