



City of Saco Planning and Development Department

Contact info: Peter Morelli, Development Director

Email: pmorelli@sacomaine.org

Phone: (207) 282-3487

Robert Hamblen, City Planner

Email: rhamblen@sacomaine.org

Phone: (207) 282-3487

Mission Statement: Meeting the needs of residents, whether those proposing a new use in their homes or those concerned with new development nearby, and helping the City Council and Planning Board to guide the city's growth, are the roles of the Planning and Development Department.

Scope of Operations: The Planning and Development Department is responsible for a variety of activities and ongoing concerns:

- Processing an average of 10-12 conditional use permits annually to consider special uses that are not allowed as a matter of right within a zoning district.
- Processing an average of 15 site plan applications annually for multiple family developments, and commercial and industrial developments.
- Ongoing work with various organizations for improvements to downtown Saco.
- Ongoing work with private, regional and state entities on development of former mill complexes and individual mill sites, as well as new industrial and business parks and other commercial enterprises.
- Working on planning issues with the city organization, such as with Parks & Recreation and outside professionals on planning and development of the Landfill Reuse Plan and other open space opportunities.
- Working on long range goals and planning issues with the City Council, the Planning Board and the Economic Development Commission, and develop long range plans such as the Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Plan.
- Identifying and applying for appropriate grants for funding of all levels of projects ongoing within the city.
- Administer the historic preservation ordinance.



Use of Resources: There are 3 full time employees in the Saco Planning and Development and Department. Neighboring towns of similar size, Biddeford and Scarborough, employ 4 and 5 respectively in their Planning and Development Departments.

Of the total city services budget, the Planning and Development Department utilizes .54% to perform its duties – or a per capita cost to citizens in FY04 of \$11.91.



Department Service Delivery Goals:

- 1) To assure that all applications submitted to the Planning and Development Department are processed in a timely and thorough fashion, with assistance provided as needed to applicants such that a fair and complete hearing is possible in a reasonable time frame.

The Department focuses on timely responses and ensuring compliance in order to meet the demands for growth within the City.

- 2) The Department will complete one major plan each year, except in the year immediately following a Comprehensive Plan. Examples in recent years include the Downtown Plan, the Comprehensive Plan, and Bicycle Pedestrian Plan.

The department and City Administration realize that these sorts of major plans are important to chart the future growth and development of the City and to assure that growth and expansion occurs consistently from one year to the next.

- 3) The department will complete at least one major, substantive set of ordinance revisions each year, except in the year following the passage of a Comprehensive Plan, when many such ordinance revisions will already be done. Recent examples include cluster (1999), extensive comprehensive plan implementation amendments (2000 and 2001), cell towers (2002), recreation and open space impact fee provisions (2002), private roads (2003), extensive housekeeping amendments (2003).

The Department realizes the importance of consistency which is achieved through the detailed direction given in the creation and updating of City ordinances.



The impact of the Planning and Department mission and service delivery goal heavily influence the city's strategic goal of Growth Management.



Performance Data: The measures used by the Planning and Development Department to gauge their performance in achieving this goal is as follows:

1A) Upon receipt of a conditional use application, Planning Board review will be scheduled within no more than 30 days for at least 95% of all such applications (Service Deliver Goal 1)

Currently, there is no system to track the time elapsing in these processes and the results can only be demonstrated anecdotally. However, the department estimates that 90% of the conditional use applications received during 2004 were processed in less than 30 days. This will be used as the benchmark for improving performance going forward as this response time will be tracked in 2005.

1B) Upon receipt of a site plan application, Planning Board review will be scheduled within no more than 45 days for at least 95% of all such applications (Service Delivery Goal 1).

Again, currently there is no system to track the time elapsing in these processes and the results can only be demonstrated anecdotally. However, the department estimates that 90% of the site plan applications received during 2004 were processed in less than 45 days. This will be used as the benchmark for improving performance going forward as this response time will be tracked in 2005.

2) Department will complete one major plan each calendar year, except for a year immediately following the completion of the Comprehensive Plan (Service Delivery Goal 2).

Plan	2000	2002	2004
Comprehensive Plan	X		
Bicycle Pedestrian Plan			X
Saco Spirit for Business Recommendation		X	
Regional Beach Management Plan	X		

3) Department will complete at least one major, substantive set of ordinance revisions each calendar year (Service Delivery Goal 3).





Ordinance	2000	2001	2002	2003
cluster housing	X			
extensive comprehensive plan amendments	X	X		
cell towers			X	
recreation & open space impact fees			X	
private roads				X
extensive housekeeping amendments				X

* There were none completed in calendar year 2004.

Citizen Survey: The Planning and Development Department satisfaction rating falls between “neutral” and “somewhat satisfied” for its overall service delivery performance by citizens surveyed with a mean rating of 3.53 on the scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means “very dissatisfied” and 5 means “very satisfied.” About 41% of total respondents were “very satisfied” (11.3%) or “somewhat satisfied” (29.3%), while about 10% were “somewhat dissatisfied” (6.8%) or were “very dissatisfied” (3.3%). A large percent of respondents, 22.3%, were “neutral,” while 27.3% responded they “don’t know,” that is they had no opinion. Both of these response categories combined influenced the final rating slightly lower.

	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Don't know	Mean Response
The City's Planning and Economic Development Department	3.3%	6.8%	22.3%	29.3%	11.3%	27.3%	3.53
The timeliness of the City's response on planning matters related to new construction?	3.8%	6.8%	21.3%	23.8%	8.0%	36.5%	3.40

However, when asked about the specific aspect of timeliness on planning matters related to new construction, the rating by survey respondents dropped slightly to a mean response of 3.4 on the 1 to 5 scale. It is important to note that the “don’t know” respondents jumped up to 36.5% in this case versus this response to the broader question (which was 27.3%), while the “very satisfied” respondents dropped to 8% (versus 11.3%) and the “somewhat satisfied” fell to 23.8% (versus 29.3%). As this measure of citizen satisfaction is the only rating directly tied back to how the Department rates its own performance, special notice of the mean rating, as well as the “don’t know” responses should be taken.

HOW ARE WE DOING?

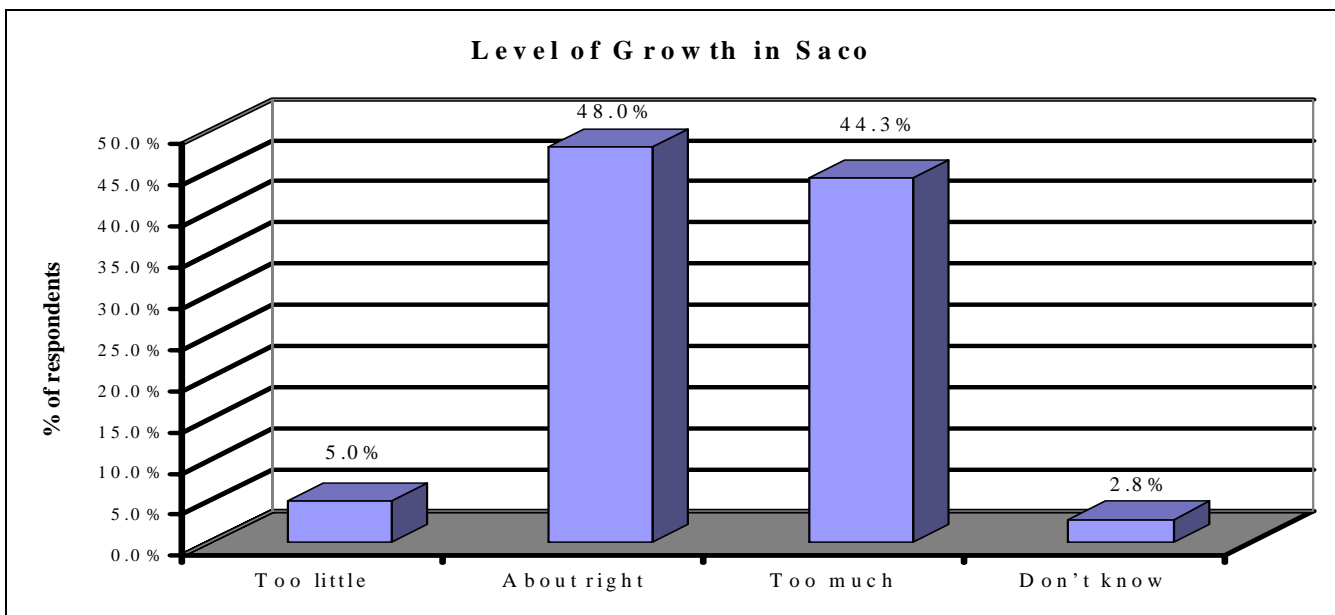


When asked about the specific aspect of the city’s planning for growth, the rating by survey respondents dropped again to a mean response of 3.27 on the 1 to 5 scale. In this case, the majority, 39.8%, felt the city’s planning for growth was “average,” that is neither poor nor good, while only 7.3% had no opinion. 17% felt the city’s planning for growth was either poor (13.8%) or “very poor” (7.3%), and 36% felt the city’s growth planning was “good” (26.5%) or “excellent” (9.5%).

Excellent	9.5%	Good/ excellent combined	36.0%
Good	26.5%		
Average	39.8%		
Poor	13.8%	Poor/ very poor combined	17.0%
Very poor	3.3%		
Don’t know	7.3%		

Mean Response	3.27
---------------	------

Finally, when asked about the level of growth in Saco, about 48% of respondents thought it was “about right” and 5% thought it was “too little,” while 44.3% thought it was “too much.” Only 2.8% if citizens surveyed did not know how to rate the level of growth in the city.





The surveyed citizen's rating for growth planning was the least positive of all the related questions put forth about Planning and Development Department, as well as one of the lowest rankings for the City overall. Alongside the 44.3% of respondents who felt Saco's level of growth is "too much," how growth of the city is handled seems like the largest issue of concern for citizens that can be yielded from this survey process.

How that issue can be addressed by the Planning and Development Department may be in part a matter of improved communications, as so many respondents had no opinion when it came to rating the department on its performance. If further information on the successes of the department was made available, such as grants awarded or new businesses brought to the city, it might improve the image of the department, as well as help citizens better understand the department's overall role. As to the specific concerns of citizens about growth and growth planning, further thought needs to be given citywide as to how to address this issue.