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TO: Nellann Mettee, The Tennessean
RE: Better Not Bigger, by Eben Fodor, 1999

Better Not Bigger presents meaningful concepts that I support, and many of which the city has implemented or is currently working towards implementing. However, like most books of this nature, you have to measure your understanding of and response to the concepts based on your individual belief. In this case, the book even recognizes this:

“There are two distinctly different, but completely compatible and even complementary, approaches to growth management. One is concerned with **how** growth should occur. The other is concerned with **whether** growth should occur.”
(Pg. 27)

I offer the following to address the Twelve Steps Toward a Sustainable Community, which is the summary of the book beginning on page 147.

1. **Build a positive vision.** Hundreds of residents participated in the Franklin Tomorrow Visioning process, which was funded by the city. This community participation effort took several years and the results are driving many of the initiatives being considered today. I was personally involved in this process and ran for office because I believed so strongly in the vision that was defined.
2. **Improve citizen involvement.** Franklin is a model for citizen participation. In fact, at national conferences, consultants who have worked for the city cite the tremendous involvement of our community. The Citizens Police Academy, Citizen Government Academy, Leadership Franklin, and Franklin Tomorrow are widely supported programs that provide for citizen involvement. Citizens also serve on advisory committees and numerous task forces in support of government decision making. And neighborhood associations and other private sector groups all across the city are involved in advocating for how to improve our community.
3. **Provide economic opportunity and equity** (*without compromising the quality of the natural environment*). Franklin is out-front in addressing stormwater management, wastewater treatment and effluent reuse, all water quality issues. Current land use regulations protect our steep hillsides and floodways from development. Equity in housing is another issue – we can and must do better with providing housing opportunities that will ensure continued diversity in our community.
4. **Use land wisely.** We have adopted new land use plans that are such a radical departure from former plans that it has caused a disconnect with existing zoning regulations. The process took two years, involved numerous citizens, and addressed the long-range vision for our community. We are now developing zoning regulations to properly interpret the land use plans. I personally am studying several land use concepts that, if adopted, will help us preserve significant open space and provide additional land use management tools, including redevelopment, TDR and DTC.

5. **Provide better information.** The city continues to invest in expanding GIS technology that provides state-of-the-art mapping information. This assists our planning and engineering efforts and the police, fire, streets and solid waste departments in servicing and protecting our community. These initiatives place us ahead of the curve for water quality issues and development concerns. We have funded city-wide aerial photography (which should be happening right now) to provide current topography, infrastructure and built information for updating our GIS applications.
6. **Use indicators and benchmarks for progress.** Indicators and benchmarks can and should be included in our zoning law.
7. **Use full-cost accounting.** This is difficult to achieve since we don't manage or have any official responsibility for schools, and we share planning and development decisions with the county. Franklin does impose impact fees on new development dedicated to the expansion and improvement of roadways and wastewater treatment. We also charge facility taxes that build and equip fire stations and pay for vehicles and other capital expenditures for the Streets and Solid Waste Departments. There are many opportunities for better inter-governmental communication that can help us determine the timing of new development and concurrency of roads and other infrastructure improvements.
8. **Think long range.** Urban Growth Boundary law, which is state mandated, and our land use plans are intended to address a 20-year period. These should be revisited and updated at least every 5-years. My frustration is that the city has a growth boundary, but county zoning law takes precedent. Without annexation, our land use plans and long-range vision cannot be implemented or enforced.
9. **Encourage efficient resource use.** We are far better than most, but there is always room for improvement.
10. **Make neighborhoods walkable.** Mixed-use development is encouraged by our land use plan, but politically we have had difficulty approving these concepts in new development applications. Tywater Crossing, which embraced walkable, mixed-use goals, was recently defeated. Westhaven is a walkable community and our historic downtown is the model. There are many community benefits of walkable neighborhoods – traffic reduction, clean air, etc. Single use, automobile dependant subdivisions are not the model we should be advocating.
11. **Preserve unique features.** Preservation is something we do extremely well and Franklin has received national recognition for the efforts of both the public and private sectors. We can still do more, especially in the area of preserving our rural landscape. This can be addressed with innovative zoning regulations and initiatives.
12. **Recognize physical limits to growth and consumption.** The state UGB program was implemented to address and contain sprawl. The city of Franklin is thus already contained. What everyone must understand is that we have no control over what growth occurs **outside** our UGB, and need to take the steps to manage and dictate what occurs **inside** our UGB.