

Smart Community Growth

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What is Smart Growth?

- Comprehensive Approach to Development
- Can be implemented at several levels:
regional, state, county, city
- Beyond “Anti-Sprawl”
 - Re-investing in Communities
 - Encouraging Transit Development and Use

Why is it Important?

- Environmental Advantages
 - Sprawl creates longer commutes and decrease in open space
- Economic Advantages
 - Poor planning results in a lack of affordable housing
 - Building outwards does not create more affordable housing
- Lifestyle Advantage
 - Decreased commutes
 - Better planned areas increase sense of community

Smart Growth Policy: Infill Development

- Looks to revitalize existing buildings through incentives or changes in zoning laws
- Saves dying city centers
- Provides affordable housing

Infill Housing Examples

- Maryland: Smart Growth Policy supports existing communities and revitalizing city centers
- Fresh Food Financing Incentive: Philadelphia program provides grants and loans to help local supermarkets in dying neighborhoods

Smart Growth Policy: Transit Oriented Development

- Create towns and villages around transit centers, such as train stations
- Mixed-use zoning allows for commercial and residential areas in same building
- Allows for properly planned development instead of poorly planned sprawl

Transit Oriented Development Examples

- CA: Fruitvale BART transit village
 - Revitalizes East Oakland inner city neighborhood
 - Provides jobs
 - Affordable housing
 - Access to health and human services around BART Station

Transit Oriented Development Examples, Cont'd

- IL: St. Clair County
 - Development around Emerson Park station near East St. Louis
 - 400 units of affordable housing
 - Commercial development
 - Park and open space development

Smart Growth Policy: Zoning for Affordable Housing

- **Inclusionary zoning** increases affordable housing by:
 - Requiring developers to make a certain percentage of new housing available to low and moderate income households
 - In return, developers receive non-monetary compensation, such as expedited permits or density bonuses that can reduce cost of construction

Inclusionary Zoning Examples

- Maryland: Montgomery County
 - Leading example of inclusionary zoning
 - Requires 12.5-15 percent of total units in every new subdivision be rented at specified affordable prices
 - Has been in place since 1974
 - Studies show no slowing in development

How do you Implement Smart Growth?

- Change zoning laws
- Incentives and tax credits for revitalizing old areas
- Combine development with transit development discussions

“Low-Hanging Fruit” #1

- Historic Preservation Tax Credits
 - In Maryland, single most effective tax credit

“Low-Hanging Fruit” #2

- Smart codes
 - Passed in New Jersey, Maryland and Rhode Island
 - Rehab old, antiquated building codes to allow for building rehabilitation to abide by different codes than new buildings.

“Low-Hanging Fruit” #3

- Tax Foreclosure Reform
 - Expedite the process by which local governments can take over abandoned buildings

“Low-Hanging Fruit” #4

- Transit Oriented Development Location Incentives
 - Illinois legislature passed a “Location-Efficiency Act” providing greater economic development incentives for builders who locate facilities close to public transit

“Low-Hanging Fruit” #5

- Affordable Housing Trust Funds
 - Provides funds for development of affordable housing
 - Vermont ties the fund to local conservation funds and real estate transfer tax

Common Criticisms

- **Unnecessary restriction**

With increasing populations, need to start planning or else affordable housing and open space will vanish

- **Sprawl creates affordable housing**

Increased transit costs, more energy used, housing savings are offset by increased costs

- **Lack of funds for development incentives**

Smart taxing and bond initiatives will create funds
Smart building will save money in the long run

Additional Resources

- Progressive States Network

www.progressivestates.org

- Smart Growth America

www.smartgrowthamerica.org

Smart Growth America also provides code audits to analyze and determine whether regulations are working well or not

- Apollo Alliance

www.apolloalliance.org

- Policy Link

www.policylink.org