A Letter from our Executive Director

This has been a year of milestones. America's population passed the 300 million mark after adding 100 million in just 39 years. For the first time, gasoline hit $3 a gallon in the United States. Energy security has risen to the top of the public's concerns. World leaders are increasingly willing to acknowledge the reality of global warming.

The next 100 million Americans will arrive even sooner than the last. In a world of finite resources, we urgently need to involve citizens in rethinking the way we grow. We need to provide for future Americans in the smartest possible way.

The good news is that after years of laying the groundwork and working to develop improved practices, smart growth advocates can now sense a profound transition in the offing. In 2006, more and more communities took up the challenge of shaping their future for the better.

Local and state leaders are engaging citizens in creating new visions for our neighborhoods and regions, pushing for more housing and transportation choices, preserving our built and natural heritage, and revitalizing towns and cities.

This year our core programs and the activities of our coalition members worked together to impact almost every state from Rancho Cordova, Calif. to Buffalo, N.Y., from Idaho to Baton Rouge, La. Together we assisted state leaders in pursuing their ambitious visions, strengthened the voices of everyday citizens, and supported efforts to help cities create healthy, vibrant neighborhoods.

At the same time, these positive advances have been challenged by a small but well-financed cadre of anti-government activists who want to eliminate safeguards against irresponsible development. But thanks, in large measure, to our coalition's efforts, all but one of the “regulatory takings” initiatives on ballots in seven states this year were defeated.

Our coalition's ability to respond to both challenges and opportunities underscores the value of expanding and energizing our network of allies. The experiences of the last year also demonstrate the power of connecting to the values and priorities of citizens who are trying to improve their lives and communities by grappling with growth. Our coalition will redouble our commitment to this work in the year ahead.

Making smart decisions about growth requires sustained vision and intense focus from citizens, officials, and the private sector. Smart Growth America is the leading national organization devoted exclusively to fostering that vision and focus. I hope you will join us in our efforts to fight for smarter growth, whether by making a contribution, signing up for our newsletters, or becoming a member of one of our local coalition groups.

Don Chen
Strengthening Our Coalition

Last year, Smart Growth America (SGA) and the Growth Management Leadership Alliance (GMLA) began a merger that set the tone for joint efforts during 2006. This union of national policy leadership with state and local advocacy has greatly strengthened the effectiveness of all parties, facilitated information exchange, and spurred collaborative action. For example, our federal policy work now draws from a much stronger base of grassroots supporters that are on the frontlines of smart growth at the local level. Also, our state and local coalition members have a much larger network of staff, national organizations, and experts to rely on. Together, we are better able to extract the common elements of local and state challenges to understand big picture trends and improve the way we deliver assistance and information to local leaders.

In the coming years, we will continue to strengthen our merged organization by focusing more on state and regional organizing, getting more involved in state legislative activities, and building the capacity of our coalition members. We have also launched a number of state-oriented campaigns on a variety of issues, including the revitalization of weak-market cities, protecting the tools that communities use to improve their quality of life, and the reclamation of abandoned properties. Under our newly developed strategic plan, we intend to begin work on energy security and a variety of other topics, all of which will further strengthen the links between our national, state, and local work.

To maximize these collaboration opportunities, SGA has continued to convene its coalition members twice a year. In January of 2006, SGA held its second annual coalition meeting, attended by more than 50 coalition members representing local organizations, statewide groups, and national advocacy organizations. For a complete coalition list, see page 10 or visit this link: www.smartgrowthamerica.org/members.html for a regularly updated list.

In December 2006, SGA’s Harriet Tregoning was tapped to lead the District of Columbia’s Office of Planning. The appointment by newly elected mayor Adrian Fenty offers a positive sign that community leaders are embracing smart growth as critical to the health and prosperity of cities and regions. As the founding director of SGA’s Smart Growth Leadership Institute, Harriet built a program of technical assistance for local governments and helped create the Governors’ Institute on Community Design.

Her appointment to the chief planning position for Washington, D.C. marks Harriet’s return to the public sector. From 1995 until 2003 she served as the Maryland State Secretary for Planning and then Cabinet Secretary for Smart Growth under Governor Parris Glendening. The smart growth cabinet position was the first office of its kind in any U.S. state. Both she and Governor Glendening joined Smart Growth America after the governor’s second term.

Tamar Shapiro, former Associate Director of SGLI, has been promoted to Director. Tamar brings her skills as a Harvard-trained attorney and her specialized knowledge of affordable housing and community development to this new role. She has been instrumental in the creation of the Governors’ Institute on Community Design.
We also held a semi-annual meeting in Maine in October. While there, representatives participated in the GrowSmart Maine Summit and the launch of the Brookings Institution’s report, *Charting Maine’s Future*.

**Strengthening Leadership**

Through its Smart Growth Leadership Institute (SGLI), Smart Growth America reaches out to state and local officials across the country, providing practical advice to address many growth and development challenges. SGLI’s assistance to local governments, intensive state-level engagement, and public outreach efforts offer decision-makers and political leaders tools and expertise to create vibrant, healthy, and prosperous communities.

Through its technical assistance program, SGLI assisted four communities in 2005 and another five in 2006. A total of 18 communities have now benefited from the four-year program.

The technical assistance recipients in 2005-2006 varied in geography, city size, and demographics:

- Greenville, S.C.
- Chattahoochee Hill Country, South Fulton, Ga.
- Coconino County, Ariz.
- Davis, Calif.
- Rancho Cordova, Calif.
- Traverse City & Grand Traverse County, Mich.
- Newton County, Ga.
- New Castle, Del.
- Camden County, N.C

SGLI held a special workshop for local officials at the 2006 New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in Denver to disseminate lessons learned from working with the first 13 communities. The session featured planners and community leaders from the client communities as well as SGLI’s consultant team.

SGLI continues to refine its smart growth implementation tools, including audits, scorecards, and strategic assessments, all of which will be collected in a guidebook that will be published in late 2007.

In October 2006, GrowSmart Maine partnered with the Brookings Institution to release a groundbreaking report, *Charting Maine’s Future*, that positions smart growth as a central feature of a broader strategy for “sustained economic prosperity and quality places.” An editorial in the *Bangor Daily News* called the report “the most perceptive and ambitious review of Maine in years.”

GrowSmart and Brookings made powerful connections among high taxes, sprawling growth in the state’s pristine countryside, disinvestment in cities and towns, and the future of Maine’s economy.

The report sent ripples throughout the state, said Alan Caron, executive director of GrowSmart Maine. “The governor’s budget message ... managed to mention our report by the fifth word. It received similar treatment in the inaugural address.” Meanwhile, a comprehensive bill including all of GrowSmart’s recommendations was working its way through the Legislature as of mid-January, managed by a special bipartisan Joint Select Committee organized solely for that purpose. “Life is interesting here in Maine, at the moment,” added Caron. For more, see www.growsmartmaine.org.
Strengthening the States
The Governors’ Institute on Community Design completed its first full year of operation in 2006. With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Institute brings governors and their cabinets and top staff together with nationally renowned experts for intensive workshops to address each state’s most pressing growth issues, ranging from transportation and transit to conservation, economic development or housing.

In the first part of 2006, the Institute held workshops for two governors: Governor Donald L. Carcieri of Rhode Island and Governor Tim Kaine of Virginia.

Governor Carcieri’s workshop on March 13, 2006 addressed transit and transit-oriented development in the upper Narragansett Bay area in Rhode Island. Participants included Governor Carcieri and his cabinet secretaries in charge of transportation, economic development, the environment, and statewide planning, planning directors for Providence, East Providence, Pawtucket, and Cranston, and representatives from the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, local universities, developers, and non-profits.

Governor Kaine’s August workshop focused on achieving the governor’s ambitious open-space conservation goals and improving the link between transportation and land use. In addition to Governor Kaine, cabinet secretaries in charge of transportation, natural resources, and finance and top staff from the Governor’s Office participated in the one and a half day session. Many of the issues addressed at the workshop have continued to dominate the political news in Virginia. In January 2007, for example, the governor announced a package of land use and transportation policy reform bills and vowed to revive a bill strengthening communities’ rights to deny rezonings if traffic from new development could overwhelm local roads.

In 2006, SGLI President and former Maryland Governor Parris Glendening gave 25 speeches about smart growth all over the nation. In July, Glendening and Christine Todd Whitman, who co-chair SGA’s National Smart Growth Council, addressed the future of growth and the need to encourage more sensible development across the state of Connecticut (please see the Member Spotlight on 1,000 Friends of Connecticut, page 5).

Other appearances included an economic growth summit in Clayton County, Georgia; a Pennsylvania conference on “Reinventing Older Communities” that attracted 500 attendees and was hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia; and keynote addresses at Grow Smart Rhode Island’s “Power of Place” Summit and the first-ever regional smart growth event in Madison, Wisconsin, sponsored by Dane County Greater Madison, Wisconsin’s Chamber of Commerce.
Strengthening the People’s Voice

The 2006 Vote

“Nothing has harnessed public frustration over out-of-control growth and won public support [in Virginia] like Governor Kaine’s promise to ensure local governments and citizens have the ‘power to say no,’” according to Lisa Guthrie, executive director of the Virginia League of Conservation Voters. Guthrie’s statement echoes the thoughts of citizens all over the country. In at least thirteen states, citizens voted for gubernatorial candidates with smart-growth or supportive agendas. Twenty-one transportation ballot initiatives were passed by citizens willing to tax themselves to invest about $40 billion in transit and other transportation upgrades. Voters in Twenty-three states approved more than $5.7 billion for land conservation, a 77 percent success rate, marking the highest rate since the Trust for Public Land and the Land Trust Alliance began keeping track in 1988.

Building on this growing public support for smarter growth, SGA and SGLI launched the States Initiative to reach out to gubernatorial candidates of all political parties. The States Initiative identified target states where growth-related issues had the potential to become central to the gubernatorial campaign. SGA coalition members in these target states took part in regular sessions to develop strategies for building public support and educating candidates, such as polling, media outreach, grassroots organizing, and developing policy platforms and briefing books.

Taking on ‘Takings’

During the fall election season, SGA served as a national clearinghouse and strategy center for battles against ballot measures designed to undercut the ability of communities to guide growth and protect the environment. Chief among those were several attempts in the West to mimic the 2004 success of Oregon’s Measure 37, which sought to gut the state’s planning and environmental protection programs under the guise of compensating owners for “regulatory takings.”

When 1,000 Friends of Connecticut formed in 2003, smart growth was a term largely absent from the state lexicon. This year, 1,000 Friends was determined to make it a principal issue in the gubernatorial and legislative campaigns, according to executive director Heidi Green. Their success was remarkable.

In October, incumbent Republican Governor Jodi Rell issued an executive order establishing an office of responsible growth within her budget office and proclaiming that “rampant, ill-conceived development” is threatening the character of Connecticut communities. John DeStefano, the key Democratic challenger and New Haven mayor, issued an eight-point plan of his own for smart growth.

The Key Issues Forum sponsored by 1,000 Friends and the Hartford Courant “was a great beginning, but our challenge is now to keep up and build on the momentum,” Heidi Green says. In 2007, the group will tackle the thorny issue of property tax reform in a state where local communities are more reliant on property taxes than most others, serving as a large incentive to sprawl. Visit 1,000 Friends at www.1000friends-ct.org

‘Speaking to Chris Williams for a January 4, 2007 report in New Dominion magazine.
Measure 37 and its copycats would require local governments to pay property owners for the purported reductions in property values resulting from limitations on land development. In effect, community taxpayers would pay private interests to obey laws in the public interest, such as laws governing wetlands and farmland protection. Some of the measures also stipulate that if governments are unable to pay compensation, they must stop enforcing the law. Supporters of these measures sought to capitalize on concern over the Supreme Court’s 2005 ruling in *Kelo v. New London, CT* by misleadingly framing these measures as a response to eminent domain misuse.

Together with its 100-plus coalition members, SGA built a bipartisan group of allies in this fight, including leaders in the environmental, land use, public health, planning, labor, progressive politics, and social justice fields. We have focused on recruiting traditional fiscal-minded conservatives, moderates, and progressives to join the coalition. The radical anti-government agenda embodied in these regulatory takings initiatives challenges the very essence of America’s model of representative government, and the coalition we lead needs to reflect that scale of threat.

“Regulatory takings” measures appeared on the ballot in Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Washington during 2006. Due in large part to the efforts of SGA’s coalition and allies, these were removed from the ballot, defeated, or substantially weakened in all but Arizona.

Initiatives to weaken property protections continue, however. In fact, steps were taken just days after the vote in California to put another initiative on the ballot in the next election. As a result, SGA is continuing to collect and disseminate information for these regulatory takings battles, expand the coalition, and raise awareness among funders.

At the federal level, SGA worked to oppose the House of Representatives’ proposed legislation, the Property Rights Implementation Act (HR 4772),
which passed the House September 29 after a vote down partisan lines. Although the Act’s supporters portray it as eminent domain legislation, the Act includes regulatory takings language that would significantly reduce local and state rights and allow anyone who feels that a city, county, or state regulation has affected their property values to sue in federal court. SGA’s property fairness federal committee continued to track progress of possible Senate legislation for the remainder of the 109th Congress.

Strengthening Communities through the National Vacant Properties Campaign

Now more than ever, communities across the country are seeking ways to strengthen their neighborhoods, cities, and regions by reclaiming vacant properties. In 2006, the SGA-based National Vacant Properties Campaign (NVPC) continued to assist cities as they make the changes necessary to realize these opportunities.

NVPC provided technical assistance to revitalize and prevent property abandonment to more than a dozen communities, including Dayton/Miami Valley, Ohio; Cleveland, Ohio; and a large-scale assessment of the Buffalo, New York region. In Indianapolis NVPC encouraged the amendment of state laws improving the ability of county executives and redevelopment commissioners to deal with abandoned properties. NVPC also provided technical help to Richmond, Va.; Baltimore, Md.; Memphis, Tenn.; Spartanburg, S.C.; Tucson, Ariz.; New Orleans, La.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Duluth, Minn.; Toledo, Ohio; and Winston-Salem, N.C.

NVPC is working with local leaders and the Fannie Mae Foundation to help New Orleans address its critical housing needs by rehabilitating the tens of thousands of tax-delinquent properties that existed well before Hurricane Katrina. In mid-2006, with help of the Campaign, the City reopened a program to sell abandoned, adjudicated (tax-delinquent) properties for redevelopment.

The Campaign also was invited to partner with the Fannie Mae Foundation in sponsoring the Maxwell Awards of Excellence. This year’s awards not only recognized outstanding affordable housing development, but also focused specifically on reclaiming vacant properties. The outstanding nonprofit applicants created thousands of affordable homes around the country, reclaiming brownfields, historic properties, vacant lots, and commercial strips. We were overwhelmed by the number of exceptional projects and outcomes throughout the country. Awards were made in four categories in October:

- Most Impressive Overall Housing Benefit
- Most Innovative Partnership
- Most Successful Public/Private Partnership
- Most Effective Catalyst for Community Revitalization

NVPC is continuing its nationwide outreach before a range of audiences. In 2006, NVPC made nine presentations, among them:

- County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania Conference (Hershey, Pa.)
- New Partners for Smart Growth (Denver, Colo.)
- Plan Baton Rouge Redevelopment Forum (Baton Rouge, La.)
- American Planning Association (San Antonio, Texas)
- Restoration 2006 (New Orleans, La.)

Building on the growing national interest in NVPC’s message, the Campaign is convening its first national conference in September 2007. NVPC also launched a new web site in January 2006 and started a monthly e-newsletter that now goes to a subscriber list of almost 2,000.
New Partnerships: Complete Streets

In 2006, SGA became host to the National Complete Streets Coalition. The Coalition defines complete streets as those designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. The goal of the Coalition is the adoption and implementation of complete streets policies in 25 cities and 5 states by 2008.

Launched in May 2006, the Coalition has enlisted many key partners, including AARP, the American Planning Association, the American Public Transportation Association, and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), in addition to national bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups. Campaign activities for the year have included an ITE web seminar, complete streets sessions at several conferences, and the first complete streets policy meeting at Rail-Volution in November. The Coalition has also added new resources to its website and launched a monthly newsletter. For more information go to the program’s website at www.completestreets.org or contact Barbara McCann: barbara@bmccann.net, 202/234/2745.

Strengthening Communication

Smart Growth America has become a go-to source of information for the news media. SGA was a key source in 61 news articles in national and regional news outlets, including The Washington Post, USA Today, the Associated Press, National Public Radio, The Christian Science Monitor, The New Orleans Times-Picayune, The Boston Globe, The Baltimore Sun, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and many others. Our work also was cited in the Quarterly Journal of Economics, Yale Law Journal, the Journal of the American Planning Association and several other academic and professional journals.

We reached beyond the sound bite in 2006, working with The Hartford Courant in Connecticut to organize a public forum with former governors Christine Todd Whitman and Parris Glendening, and assisting with an op-ed signed by the governors. Other letters and

OUTREACH SPOTLIGHT:
The Bruner-Loeb Forum in Baton Rouge

The sudden population increase in Baton Rouge resulting from the Hurricane Katrina diaspora raised urgent questions about Baton Rouge’s future growth. Those issues were the focus of a March 6th forum of national and local experts, convened by the Smart Growth Leadership Institute, the National Vacant Properties Campaign, the Bruner-Loeb Forum, the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, the Center for Planning Excellence, and the Fannie Mae Foundation. Although Baton Rouge is under pressure to act now because of the immediate need to house its new residents, cities throughout the country are confronting the same problems as they try to make redevelopment easier in existing communities rather than watching development occur on the fringes.

Baton Rouge Mayor-President Kip Holden’s participation in the forum signaled his interest in moving forward on these issues. He intends to work with the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and other forum participants to propose legislation at the next legislative session beginning at the end of March. SGLI and NVPC are drafting a report summarizing the authorities and practices of different redevelopment models, including redevelopment authorities and land banks.

From February to April, SGA’s communications director, David Goldberg, provided communications support and community outreach assistance to planning teams led by DPZ in rebuilding charrettes for three Louisiana communities: Vermilion Parish, St. Bernard Parish, and the Gentilly district of New Orleans. SGA’s guidebook, *Choosing Our Community’s Future*, was distributed in all of those locations, and is being used by the Center for Planning Excellence in Baton Rouge in their ongoing work with citizens on the redevelopment of the region.

Our web site, www.smartgrowthamerica.org, attracts nearly 10,000 visitors a month and received more than 2.4 million hits during 2006. Our twice-monthly e-newsletter, *Smart Growth around America*, goes to a subscriber list approaching 5,000.

**MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:**

**Good Jobs First**

During the last six months, SGA member Good Jobs First established a critical research base to demonstrate the link between state economic development subsidies and sprawl. The Washington, D.C.-based advocacy and research group now has mapped the growth impact of almost 5,000 such subsidies in two major metropolitan areas (Chicago and the Twin Cities of Minnesota) and all the metro areas of Michigan.

All three studies show disproportionate subsidies in newly developing areas on the urban fringe, usually outside the transit grid. Urban cores and older suburbs routinely are passed up for such investment. The Twin Cities study also analyzed corporate relocations, showing that many firms got incentives to move from older urban areas to the exurbs. All three reports contain policy recommendations, such as greater geographic targeting of incentives to be sure that aid is going to places most in need.

“There’s quite a bit of money out there being used for economic development, but there has been very little attention paid to exactly where that money is going and what effect it’s having on sprawl,” said Philip Mattera, research director for Good Jobs First. “The end result is that the subsidies are exacerbating the sprawl problem.” For more, see www.goodjobsfirst.org.
Statement of Activities
for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2006

Support
Grants $1,626,975
Foundations $1,173,500
Government Agencies $453,475
Individual Contributions $164,961
Other Income $223,160
Total Support $2,015,096

Expenses
Program Services $1,577,773
Program Services Subtotal
Fundraising $43,596
Management $49,924
Total Expenses $1,671,293
Change in Net Assets $343,803

SGA Coalition Members
1,000 Friends of Connecticut
1,000 Friends of Florida
1,000 Friends of Iowa
1,000 Friends of Maryland
1,000 Friends of Minnesota
1,000 Friends of New Mexico
1,000 Friends of Oregon
1,000 Friends of Wisconsin
10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania
Alliance for Transportation Research Institute
American Farmland Trust
American Land Institute
American Planning Association
American Rivers
Anchorage Citizens Coalition
Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest
Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership
Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin
The Biodiversity Project
Center for Community Change
Center for Neighborhood Technology
Center for Transit-Oriented Development
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Citizens for Sensible Transportation
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Coastal Conservation League
Congress for New Urbanism
Cumberland Region Tomorrow
The Conservation Fund
Conservation Law Foundation
Defenders of Wildlife
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Environment Colorado
Environmental and Energy Study Institute
Environmental Defense
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Friends of the Earth
FutureWise
Gamaliel Foundation
The Georgia Conservancy
Good Jobs First
Greater Ohio
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Greenbelt Alliance
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- The Lewis Foundation
- The National Audubon Society
- The National Endowment for the Arts
- New York Community Trust
- The Peterson Family Foundation
- The Stephen & Diana Goldberg Foundation
- The Surdna Foundation
- The Tides Center
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- The Virginia and Charles Brewer Family Foundation
- The Wallace Global Fund
- The William Penn Foundation
- The Wyss Foundation
“The current system does subsidize sprawl. When we build the roads, when we approve the economic development loans and grants, when we decide where the new campus is going to be, when we authorize new water and sewer lines...we are, in fact, subsidizing [sprawl] in a major way.

— former Maryland Governor Parris Glendening, Connecticut Key Issues Forum, July 2006