FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 11, 2003

**New Governors Taking up Smart Growth Mantle**

*Former Maryland Governor also stays in smart-growth game, as head of SGA’s Smart Growth Leadership Institute*

**CONTACT:** Alex Goldschmidt, Smart Growth America, (202) 207-3355 x112, agoldschmidt@smartgrowthamerica.org

Washington, DC – Despite the sagging economy – and in some cases, because of it – more governors than ever are pursuing smart-growth initiatives this year, even with the departure from office of the governor most closely associated with the term “smart growth”.

And though he’s left office, former Maryland Gov. Parris Glendening is staying in the fight for better choices in how our cities and towns grow and develop. The governor has agreed to head the Smart Growth Leadership Institute, which is being established by Smart Growth America as a resource for the thousands of elected officials, including governors, who are grappling with the policies, politics and possibilities associated with urban growth challenges. (for more on Glendening’s new role, please see [http://smartgrowthamerica.org](http://smartgrowthamerica.org))

At the same time, several new governors -- both Republican and Democrat – are on a path to continue Glendening’s legacy of innovative approaches to curbing sprawl, conserving precious landscapes and reinvigorating existing cities, towns and suburbs.

Some examples:

In **Michigan**, Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm has gained what some are calling her first significant policy achievement: A bipartisan consensus that sprawl is a serious problem and merits immediate state action. With Michigan metro areas sprawling rapidly despite slow population growth, both Republican leaders and the governor are starting to see Smart Growth ideas playing a role in reducing government expenses as they face a $2 billion budget deficit. Gov. Granholm and Republican legislative leaders have created the bipartisan Michigan Land Use Leadership Council, charging it with “identifying the trends, causes, and consequences of urban sprawl.” The 26-member panel will also recommend policies that “minimize the impact of current land use trends on Michigan’s environment and economy.” (for more, see [http://mlui.org](http://mlui.org))

**South Carolina’s** new Republican governor, Mark Sanford, made the issue of “school sprawl” a central theme of his state of the state address in late January,
criticizing the construction of massive, isolated schools “Rather than walking or biking to their neighborhood school, many students spend more time stuck on buses than they do with their families. And perhaps worst of all, many children are ignored in these large schools. … In addition to depriving many students of a quality education, these remotely sited mega schools also accelerate developmental sprawl into our rural areas - and what comes with it - increased car trips, lengthened bus routes, and a disappearing countryside.” Sanford issued a call to the state’s elected leadership to tackle the issue by steering resources toward schools that are better planned, smaller and more neighborhood-friendly. (see http://www.state.sc.us/governor/)

Another Republican, Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, has vowed to employ smart growth principles in addressing the state’s critical issues of housing affordability, environmental protection and transportation investment. He appointed one of the state’s leading conservationists, Douglas Foy, to coordinate state policies guiding transportation, the environment and development. And he’s implemented a more community-friendly, “fix it first” transportation policy for state highways, eschewing the creation of new highways in the countryside. Romney is advocating smart growth investment strategies as a way to save tax dollars in an era of fiscal constraints. (Boston Globe, Jan. 15 and 28)

New Jersey Gov. James McGreevey has made combating sprawl the focal point of his administration, saying in his Jan 14 State of the State address: “It can no longer be acceptable to let one town develop as it pleases to the detriment of its neighbors. We must have a mechanism to plan and control regional growth. …The answer to congestion and sprawl isn’t only saying ‘No’. We must make our urban centers, older suburbs, and rural towns more viable and attractive by redeveloping brownfields and steering infrastructure spending to these areas.”

Pennsylvania’s new governor, Democrat Ed Rendell, has made smart growth policies a priority and hired Roy Kienitz, who helped implement Maryland’s Smart Growth Initiative as that state’s planning director, to coordinate transportation and environment policies on the governor’s staff. Rendell also has hired Joanne Denworth, former president of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania — a statewide smart growth organization — to be part of his environmental policy staff.

In Tennessee, Gov. Phil Bredesen criticized the state DOT’s lack of accountability and appointed an outsider to lead its reform. He also appointed Ed Cole, who heads a smart-growth advocacy group called Cumberland Region Tomorrow, to oversee a new planning effort at the state DOT aimed at better managing the agency’s impact on communities and the environment.
Longer-serving governors, too, are continuing to make strides. **Utah's Republican Gov., Mike Leavitt** helped found the Utah Quality Growth Commission and has brokered a deal to finance the development of commuter and light rail systems. Governors in Illinois, Maine, Delaware and New Mexico also have made comments and initiated policies that apply smart-growth principles.

“America is becoming aware of the great destruction that is being done by sprawl,” said Gov. Glendening, “and many places are electing people who want to create better places and leave a legacy worthy of our children.

“After the last round of elections,” he added, “I was extraordinarily excited and pleased that a number of the new governors enunciated in the first week or so of office the importance of dealing with sprawl and using smart growth principles.”

Glendening said he was joining Smart Growth America and developing the new Institute to “do everything I can to help these courageous individuals.”

Don Chen, executive director of Smart Growth America, noted that while much of the action is happening, naturally, at the state level, smart growth is very much a national movement. Leaders at all levels of government and civic life are gaining inspiration and ideas from each others’ efforts, and more and more citizens are beginning to demand new approaches.

“The Governor’s experience as a city, county and state official will be a valuable resource for fellow leaders who are grappling with growth headaches,” Chen said. “This peer-to-peer networking around smart growth will greatly elevate the discussion all over the nation, and will make it easier for grassroots groups to be heard.”

Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a founding member of the Smart Growth American coalition, said the movement’s continued momentum, even in times of economic uncertainty and threatened war, demonstrated its staying power.

"We've seen years of real accomplishment by the smart growth movement in containing sprawl, enhancing the environment, revitalizing communities, keeping schools in neighborhoods, and ensuring a better quality of life for ourselves and our families," Moe said. "The essential thing is to offer people a viable alternative to sprawl. That means reclaiming the streets and neighborhoods where people live - the towns, inner cities and older suburbs that we've neglected so badly for the past half-century. Reinvestment in existing communities is smart growth."

**Smart Growth America** is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth
practices to more communities nationwide. From providing more sidewalks to ensuring more homes are built near public transit or that productive farms remain a part of our communities, smart growth helps make sure people across the nation can live in great neighborhoods. For additional information, please visit www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

###