



# ***Better Choices For Our Communities***

Smart Growth America | Annual Report | 2007



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page 8 (r): Coalition for Smarter Growth



## from our Executive Director

SGA was launched in 2000 to build and lead a broad advocacy coalition to promote better ways to grow our communities. Since then, SGA has organized national campaigns to support policy reforms or halt harmful measures, sponsored groundbreaking research, and orchestrated communications efforts that have defined various public debates. We have also provided direct assistance to over 40 communities and many public officials, including six sitting governors, and actively partnered with a wide range of influential groups, elected officials, and private sector leaders to advance smart growth.

We have also become a focal point for the smart growth movement. We currently host the Smart Growth Leadership Institute, the Governors' Institute on Community Design, the National Vacant Properties Campaign, and the Complete Streets Campaign, all of which have delivered tremendous value and expertise to America's communities. In 2006, we also merged with the Growth Management Leadership Alliance, the 18-year old organization that pioneered the creation of anti-sprawl policies and now includes 36 state and regional groups.

Most recently, I have been particularly pleased that SGA is leading efforts to explore the links between urban development, transportation, oil dependence, and climate change. We co-produced the new book, *Growing Cooler: The Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change*, and are leading a national effort to craft policies that will help the U.S. meet the demand for green, walkable neighborhoods while shrinking our carbon footprint.

I reflect on these accomplishments because this is my last letter as SGA's CEO. In February 2008, I started a new position at the Ford Foundation, where I will apply my career experiences to design new strategies for community development in low-income areas. My departure is certainly bittersweet. As SGA's founder, I feel incredibly fortunate to have spent the past eight years building this organization and coalition. But I'm also delighted to be leaving at a time when SGA is part of a robust and growing network, and is exceptionally well-positioned to help advance reforms for a variety of pressing issues, from energy and climate to affordable housing and transportation.

Lastly, I am enormously gratified that Geoff Anderson has been chosen to be my successor. As the head of EPA's smart growth program, Geoff has been a superbly effective leader in the smart growth movement, and I am certain that he will relish the opportunity to be an unbridled advocate. I plan to cheer him on as he elevates SGA to a new level of effectiveness and influence.

I'm very proud of our team at SGA. Our staff, Board, and coalition members are the finest bunch I've ever worked with. I look forward to seeing all of you continue to succeed in improving the way our communities grow.

Don Chen

## A Change at the Helm

In January 2008, Geoffrey Anderson became the new president and chief executive officer of Smart Growth America, succeeding founding executive director and CEO Don Chen. Don made an important transition in his career, and a leap on behalf of advocates for more thoughtful growth and development, when he was named a program officer in Community Development at the Ford Foundation, the country's second largest philanthropy. Don will now manage a substantial grants portfolio and bring his expertise to bear in shaping a new strategy for the foundation's community development work.

Geoff has headed the smart growth program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency since 2000. In a 13-year career at EPA, Geoff distinguished himself as an innovator, helping to establish the links among environmental protection, quality of life, and the growth and development of our communities. Over the last seven years he has built the smart growth program into a critical resource for local communities grappling with planning and development issues, reinterpreting environmental protection not as regulatory inter-

ference, but as a partnership that helps communities achieve a vision for current and future generations.

Anderson helped conceive and implement EPA's highly successful technical assistance program, and has contributed to numerous publications and seminal reports that have proved indispensable in building the knowledge base and expertise for smart growth over the last 10 years.

In accepting the position, Anderson noted, "With states tackling climate change, concern over energy independence and rising gas prices, and the national transportation law coming up for debate, this is a time of great opportunity for those of us who care about creating and sustaining great places.

"I want to work with SGA's coalition partners to unite advocates for housing, transportation, economic and community development, health, aging, and other arenas to build the political will for change on behalf of stronger communities, a healthier environment, and a more competitive economy."





## Don Chen and Smart Growth

Even before he became SGA's founding director in 2000, Don Chen was a leader of the movement for more thoughtful building of our communities. When the "smart growth" concept first emerged in the mid-1990s, Don was there to help articulate the issues and opportunities for new models of sustainable development.

Influential early writings included "The Science of Smart Growth," in the December 2000 issue of *Scientific American*, and *Once There Were Greenfields*, an authoritative review of the economic, environmental and social costs of suburban sprawl, which he co-authored with F. Kaid Benfield and Matthew D. Raimi. Widely recognized as

an authority on urban topics, he has lectured in North America, Europe, Australia, and Asia; has testified before the U.S. Congress on smart growth issues; and is a frequent source for the news media. We anticipate even better and brighter contributions from Don in his new position at the Ford Foundation.

# Shrinking the Nation's Carbon Footprint through Smart Growth

In September, working with the University of Maryland, the Urban Land Institute, and others, SGA released major findings from *Growing Cooler: The Evidence on Urban Development and Climate Change*. The central premise of *Growing Cooler* is that meeting the growing demand for convenient and walkable neighborhoods could significantly reduce car dependence and vehicle miles driven. The response was overwhelming, and many of our coalition members participated in metropolitan media events to increase their local visibility.

The study represents a collaboration among leading urban planning researchers, including Reid Ewing of the University of Maryland; Steve Winkelman of the Center for Clean Air Policy; Keith Bartholomew of the University of Utah; and Jerry Walters of Fehr & Peers Associates, with SGA's Don Chen, David Goldberg and Barbara McCann contributing as well. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Hewlett Foundation provided funding for the underlying research. SGA coordinated the multi-disciplinary team that developed the recommended policy actions, and is leading a broad coalition to develop those strategies further.

*Growing Cooler* bases its findings on a comprehensive review of dozens of studies. The key conclusion: Urban development is both a key contributor to climate change and an essential factor in combating it.

The book draws a sharp distinction between driving patterns of Americans who live in compact urban neighborhoods and those in automobile-oriented suburbs. Americans who live in compact neighborhoods with multiple transportation options drive a third fewer miles than their counterparts in the suburbs.

Overall, the number of miles Americans drive has grown three times faster than population since 1980, and almost twice as fast as vehicle registrations. Spread-out development is the key factor in that rate of growth, the research team found.

The book documents market research showing that a growing proportion of future housing demand lies in smaller homes and lots, townhouses, and condominiums in neighborhoods where jobs and activities are close at hand. Demographic changes, shrinking households, rising gas prices, lengthening commutes and cultural shifts all play a role in that demand.

Real estate projections cited by the report show that two-thirds of development expected to be on the ground in 2050 is not yet built, meaning that the potential for change is profound. The authors calculate that shifting 60 percent of new growth to compact patterns would save 85 million tons of CO2 annually by 2030. The savings over that period equate to a 28 percent increase in federal vehicle efficiency standards by 2020, comparable to

the energy savings called for in the measure recently adopted by Congress. With *Growing Cooler* as the launching pad, SGA worked throughout the fall of 2007 with leading players to advance smart growth and transportation policies within the climate change debate at all levels of government and in various sectors. SGA's local affiliates throughout the country produced their own local releases

in California, New Mexico, Maine, Michigan, and many others.

The report and its findings have received substantial media coverage in both print and broadcast, throughout the country. The printed book, with expanded and updated findings and policy recommendations, is due out from ULI in March.

## Promoting Revitalization and Restoring Prosperity

Four years after SGA and its partners launched the National Vacant Properties Campaign, more and more cities are stepping up to the plate to tackle the issue of vacant and abandoned properties. The Campaign itself is garnering more attention, particularly as communities struggle with the fallout from the foreclosure crisis.

In September 2007, the Campaign hosted the first-ever national conference on reclaiming abandoned properties, in partnership with the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Six hundred people gathered in Pittsburgh to share their experiences and learn how to address and avoid vacancy and abandonment. The conference was written up by *Planetizen*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and *Getting Smart!* For many attendees, this was the first opportunity to connect with others engaged in developing real solutions to this issue. Community leaders from many Rust Belt cities spent an extra day in Pittsburgh to participate in a policy charrette with the Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio on "right-sizing" post-industrial cities with shrinking populations. The charrette provided a neutral atmosphere for local leaders and national experts to have a dialogue about the planning and policy implications of planned shrinkage.

Campaign staff also participated in events including a workshop in conjunction with the American Planning Association's Planning in Black Communities Division, the National Property Preservation Conference, and a conference put

on by the Department of Justice's Community Capacity Development Office.

In 2008, with leadership from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the Campaign is launching a New Orleans Vacant Properties Initiative to assist city leaders and partners in rebuilding New Orleans. The Initiative's director will work with the City's Office of Recovery and Development Administration and the New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, other local leaders, and community stakeholders to help plan and implement improvements in the acquisition, management, and disposition of uninhabited properties. Our hope is that as New Orleans develops strategies to reclaim nearly 100,000 vacant properties, it will become a model for the rest of the country on revitalization.

### Restoring Prosperity to America's Older Industrial Cities

In 2007, Smart Growth America worked with the Brookings Institution and other partners to launch the Restoring Prosperity Initiative, a focused effort to help older industrial cities capitalize on their assets and create new roles for themselves in the modern economy. Much of our work in 2008 will focus on six states: Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. SGA also is maintaining the web site for the initiative, at [restoringprosperity.org](http://restoringprosperity.org).





*“Participants’ name tags read like a who’s who of America’s post-industrial Rust Belt, with representatives attending from Cleveland, Buffalo, Detroit and Youngstown, Ohio, among others. [The conference] seemed to unite them.”*

Justin Vellucci, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*

## National Legislative Initiatives

In 2007, SGA successfully defended funding for the EPA Smart Growth Program, which was threatened with serious budget cuts. SGA members made calls and wrote letters while SGA staff worked on supportive “Dear Colleague” letters that generated 15 signatures in the Senate and 12 signatures in the House. On December 21, 2007, with time running out before the holiday recess, Congress passed an appropriations bill that fully funds the program.

Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Congressman Norm Dicks (D-WA) and their staffs deserve kudos for their work to block these funding cuts. SGA worked closely with staff in the office of Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) on this issue. Now Senator Landrieu’s office is interested in working to dramatically expand the Smart Growth program in the future.

In 2007, SGA also worked with the office of Senator Carper (D-DE) to develop an amendment

to climate change legislation moving through the Senate that would target some of the funds in the bill to states and localities for smart growth measures that reduce global warming pollution. While the measure failed at the committee level, SGA is continuing to work with environmental, transit, local government, and other partner groups to build support for this proposal as the climate measure moves to the Senate floor.

Smart Growth America also has been working with Reconnecting America and other organizations to create a broad coalition and coordinated campaign to lay the groundwork for the next major overhaul of the nation’s transportation program, expected in 2009. Given the concerns over decaying infrastructure, a depleted transportation fund, rising gas prices, oil dependence and global warming, the arguments for major reform are powerful, and SGA and our allies plan to be in the thick of the debate.



## SGLI Speakers Spread the Word

Former Maryland Governor Parris Glendening, on behalf of the Smart Growth Leadership Institute, traveled across the continent – from the Carolinas to Canada – giving speeches and sharing his experiences with citizens, planners, local officials, and politicians of every stripe.

Glendening gave more than 30 presentations throughout the country, including talks in Florida, West Virginia, California, Indiana, and Pennsylvania.

SGLI staff also made appearances throughout the country in 2007. Tamar Shapiro

gave a presentation on smart growth implementation at a conference in West Virginia. Benjamin de la Peña presented at a conference in Ontario, Canada. SGLI staff will also be speaking at several sessions at the upcoming New Partners conference.

## Helping Communities Implement Smart Growth

Building on its extensive experience providing technical assistance to communities around the country, the Smart Growth Leadership Institute has developed a powerful set of planning and policy tools that were released in late 2007. Through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Institute has developed these tools to help communities untangle the thicket of policies and procedures that inhibit smart growth and sustainable urban development. Now communities around the nation can gauge whether their current policy and regulatory frameworks encourage and support smart growth.

The following tools have been released:

- Smart Growth Policy Audit
- Smart Growth Code and Zoning Audit
- Smart Growth Project Scorecard
- Incentives Matrix
- Smart Growth Strategy Builder

In December, SGLI hosted an online discussion about the tools that drew more than one hundred participants. SGLI also presented the tools on the Smart City radio show. The tools are available via [www.smartgrowthtoolkit.net](http://www.smartgrowthtoolkit.net).

In 2007, SGLI also launched a new program focused on integrating state level source water protection and land use policies, supported by a

grant from EPA's Water Office. In collaboration with the Trust for Public Land, SGLI will provide advice and technical assistance to three states during the first year of the program, helping them better integrate their programs for source-water protection and land use. The three states selected for the first year are Maine, Ohio, and New Hampshire. Additional states will be selected for future years of the grant.

### The Governors' Institute on Community Design

The Governors' Institute on Community Design continued its work with governors on growth issues in 2007, designing intensive workshops for governors, their cabinets, and staff on issues related to growth and development. At each of these workshops, the Institute brings together one governor, his or her cabinet and staff, and a team of nationally renowned experts to address a growth-related challenge identified in advance by the governor. Since its creation, the Institute has worked with the governors of Rhode Island, Virginia, Arizona, Maryland, Delaware, and Wyoming. We have been invited back for follow-up work in some of these states, and look forward to designing workshops for more governors in 2008.





## Taking the Public Pulse on Growth and Transportation

SGA collaborated with the National Association of Realtors® to produce a nationwide poll to determine Americans' feelings on growth, transportation, and infrastructure issues. Among the findings: Three-fourths of Americans believe that being smarter about development and improving public transportation are better long-term solutions for reducing traffic congestion than building new roads. Learn more about the 2007 Growth and Transportation Survey on our website at [www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org)

We also are gearing up for a major push for transportation policy reform with the reauthorization of the federal transportation law, expected in 2009. In anticipation of that effort, we commissioned a separate, more in-depth poll, working in coalition with the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership and Reconnecting America. The findings are being used to prepare a strategic communications plan for the transportation reform campaign.



### Victory at the Ballot Box

In 2007, SGA and its allies once again fought "regulatory takings" measures advocated by anti-government activists, with two notable victories.

In Alaska, voters overwhelmingly rejected a "takings" ballot measure in Matanuska-Susitna Borough, an area north of Anchorage that has begun to experience growth pressure. In Oregon, an impressive 62 percent of voters approved Measure 49, a partial fix to the mess created by the "pay-or-waive" Measure 37 three years ago. Though billed in 2004 as a way for families to build a few

houses on their land, Measure 37 essentially gutted 30 years of progressive and public-minded land use regulation in Oregon, making it possible for just about anything to be built anywhere. Measure 49 represents a compromise to allow smaller developments of up to 10 houses to be built in certain scenarios, and prevents huge subdivisions and other incompatible uses in farm and forest areas.

Interestingly, Measure 49 passed by nearly the same margin that Measure 37 passed with in 2004. Voter comments, interviews,

and letters over the last year clearly illustrate that residents felt that they were bamboozled by Measure 37, and believed they got something entirely different than what they thought they were voting for.

In the words of Bob Stacey of 1,000 Friends of Oregon, "We have 60-plus percent of Oregonians speaking out for the Oregon we love, ten thousand volunteers who worked on this campaign, and five thousand donors who underwrote the terrific campaign team that built this victory."



*“A growing number of states and local governments are rejecting a half-century of transportation practice and demanding that streets accommodate all types of travel, not just automobiles. The concept of “complete streets” — with bike lanes, sidewalks and room for mass transit — has attracted a diverse national alliance of supporters, including advocates for senior citizens and the disabled.”*

John Ritter, *USA Today*

## Progress Toward Complete Streets

The National Complete Streets Coalition, an independent effort housed and supported by SGA, continues to garner attention, with a front-page story in *USA Today*, a two-page spread in the *AARP Bulletin*, and a laudatory column by Neal Peirce. More than 20 jurisdictions have adopted complete-streets policies since 2006, including a statewide complete streets law in Illinois in 2007. In 2008, SGA will be pushing for a federal complete-streets law.

Syndicated columnist Neal Peirce wrote of the campaign: “Now, finally, there’s an organized nationwide movement to fight the good fight for saner streets. It’s a coalition mounting a nationwide campaign for city and town roadways that include safe, quality space for pedestrians and cyclists and public transit users, accommodating their wishes just as seriously as those of car and truck drivers.”

In 2007, the Coalition embarked on training sessions to help communities develop and

implement complete streets policies. Coalition Coordinator Barbara McCann worked with Michael Ronkin to offer four of the workshops in the summer and fall. In early December 2007, McCann and Ronkin spent a day working with the District of Columbia using a new workshop format to help develop the elements of a proposed complete streets policy for Washington. The workshop was sponsored by the Washington Area Bicyclist Association with support from the Prince Charitable Trusts. The Coalition plans to train other workshop leaders in early 2008, in order to launch a comprehensive Complete Streets Local Implementation Assistance Program.

In late November, McCann traveled with Thunderhead Alliance staff and Thunderhead trainer Ron Millam to Flint, Michigan, to work with The Disability Network, Safe and Active Flint, and a number of other stakeholders to develop a complete streets campaign plan for Genesee County.





## Talking - and Blogging - Heads

SGA continues to work hard to get out the word about better planning and development. Apart from coverage of *Growing Cooler* and the Realtors®/SGA poll, SGA representatives were quoted or cited in more than a dozen news articles, including *The Washington Post*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *The Morning Call* (Allentown, PA), *The Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), *USA Today*, *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), *News and Record* (Greensboro, NC), *Engineering News Record*,

*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, *Creative Loafing* (Atlanta, GA), *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Inside Bay Area* (CA), *The Hartford Courant* (Connecticut), *The San Jose Mercury News*, and others.

In addition, we launched a new blog. The blog provides a flexible, frequently updated forum for breaking news and new ideas. The format gives readers easy access to the latest smart growth headlines from around the world, clusters of related stories and information for easy access

to multiple related links, a forum in which to share their comments and interact with one another, and the ability to email stories to colleagues directly from the blog.

Recent topics on the blog include the latest smart-growth news from Capitol Hill, news on the growing trend for governors to build smart growth cabinets at the state level, and information on the relationship between transportation and creation of a competitive workforce.



## Coalition Member Spotlight: Montana

Last year was a banner one for Montana's growth and development. The legislature passed seven different measures that support smart growth—and nearly passed an eighth—while blocking several other proposals that threatened sound land use planning. The Montana Smart Growth Coalition (MSGC) worked on many fronts to gain these legislative successes.

Perhaps the biggest triumph was Senate Bill 201, which enjoyed bipartisan support in the legislature. SB 201 creates the state's first smart growth planning process for Montana's cities and counties. MSGC worked closely with the Montana Association of Realtors, whose support was

critical to the bill's passage. Other new laws for Montana include:

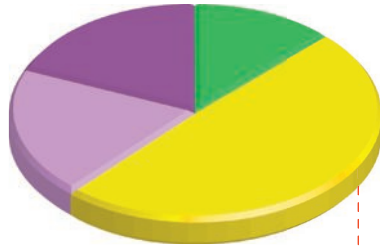
- SB 51, a measure aimed at limiting development that could be threatened by wildfire;
- SB 527, which closes a loophole that permitted large-scale developments without any review of the impact on infrastructure, neighboring property owners, or the environment;
- Senate Bill 363 and SB 41, which together ensure that property taken through eminent domain cannot be given to a private developer;
- SB 491, which reorganizes the state's revolving loan account for affordable

housing under the new Montana Housing Fund, to better enable the investment of state funds in affordable housing projects.



- HB 425, which strengthens the planning aspect of the existing law on subdivision by requiring would-be subdividers to meet with local planning staff and become acquainted with overall local goals for land use.

One important bill did not make it out of the Montana legislature. SB 345 proposed creating statewide river and stream setbacks and a clear process for local governments to adopt their own setbacks. MSGC vows to continue working on the bill in future sessions.

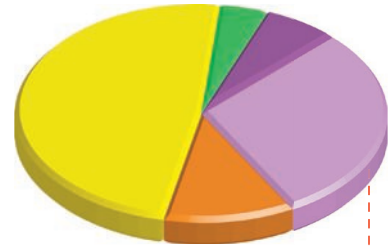
# Statement of Activities for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2007



## Support

Grants	\$1,053,094	
<i>Non-government</i>	755,000	
<i>Government Agencies</i>	298,094	
Contributions	286,533	
Other Income	189,285	

**Total Support** **\$ 1,528,912**



## Expenses

Program Services	\$1,700,870	
<i>Advocacy and Policy</i>	\$562,104	
<i>Communications and Outreach</i>	\$219,231	
<i>Implementation and Advising</i>	\$919,535	
Fundraising	\$78,480	
General and Administrative	\$126,944	

**Total Expenses** **\$1,906,294**

**Total Change in Net Assets** **(\$ 377,382)\***

*\*Reflects spending down of multi-year grants received in 2006*

*Many thanks to the foundations, businesses, and individual contributors who supported our work during the 2006-2007 fiscal year. We are grateful for their generosity and commitment to smart growth.*

## Contributors

AARP	Conan Smith	National Association of Realtors®
Alabama Bicycle Coalition Inc.	Don Chen	Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Association
American Express	Fannie Mae	Nina Rodale Houghton
Association of Pedestrian & Bicycle Professionals	Federal Capital Partners	Piedmont Environmental Council
Bicycle Federation of America, Inc.	International Council of Shopping Centers	The Michael Companies
Bikes Belong	James Chapman	The Whiting-Turner Contracting Company
Bohannon Huston	Kimbel Butler	Vanguard Charitable Endowment
Brian Hagerty	Loiderman Soltesz Association, Inc.	Wallace Consulting
Chiu Wong	Mark Smith	William Borah
Congress for the New Urbanism	Medstar Health	Young Men's Democratic Club of Prince George's County, MD
	National Association of Counties	

## Foundations and Other Grantmakers

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Stephen & Diana Goldberg Foundation	The National Endowment for the Arts
Funder's Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities	Surdna Foundation	The Tides Center
Gamaliel Foundation	The Fannie Mae Foundation	The Wallace Global Fund
Homebuilding Community Foundation	The Foundation for Maryland's Future	The Wyss Foundation
Orton Family Foundation	The Lewis Foundation	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## SGA Board Members

Fiscal Year 2006-2007

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## SGA Coalition Members

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1,000 Friends of Wisconsin  
10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania  
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American Land Institute  
American Planning Association  
American Rivers  
Anchorage Citizens Coalition  
Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership  
The Biodiversity Project  
Bluegrass Tomorrow KY  
Campaign for Sensible Growth  
Center for Community Change  
Center For Neighborhood Technology  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Coalition for Smarter Growth  
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Conservation Fund, The  
Conservation Law Foundation  
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Idaho Smart Growth  
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Local Government Commission  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance  
Metropolitan Planning Council  
Michigan Environmental Council  
Michigan Land Use Institute  
Michigan Suburbs Alliance  
National Center For Bicycling And Walking  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Trust for Historic Preservation  
National Wildlife Federation

Natural Resources Defense Council  
New Jersey Future  
North Carolina Smart Growth Alliance  
Northeast Midwest Institute  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Pennsylvania Environmental Council  
Piedmont Environmental Council  
PolicyLink  
Project For Public Spaces  
Rails To Trails Conservancy  
Reconnecting America  
Regional Plan Association  
Scenic America  
Sierra Club  
Smart Coast  
Smart Growth British Columbia  
Smart Growth for Louisiana  
Smart Growth Partnership  
Smart Growth Vermont  
Sonoran Institute  
South Carolina Coastal Conservation League  
Southern Environmental Law Center  
Surface Transportation Policy Project  
Transportation And Land Use Coalition  
Trust for Public Land  
Upstate Forever  
Urban Habitat  
US Public Interest Research Group  
Vermont Natural Resource Council  
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## SGA Staff

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