

Choosing

Our Community's Future



A Citizen's Guide to Getting the Most Out of New Development

BY DAVID GOLDBERG
Smart Growth America

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Smart Growth America is a non-profit coalition of national, state and local organizations working to help communities grow in ways that sustain quality of life, provide plentiful options in housing and transportation, preserve our built and natural heritage and promote a healthy economy. Our members work on behalf of public health, the environment, historic preservation, social equality, land conservation, neighborhood redevelopment, farmland protection, labor, town planning and more.

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

I first became interested in – OK, obsessed – with how development and growth affect our lives in the early 1990s, when my young family and I bought our first house in the then-distant suburbs of Atlanta. We were seduced by a new subdivision on the edge of a quaint Southern town set amid gently rolling farmland. But from the moment we moved in, that landscape began to change, and fast. The new neighbors were fine, but why were we converting farms and forests into throwaway shopping centers that could be anywhere, instead of building on the more compact and beautiful model of the old town center? And why did our widened roads fill up with traffic so fast? I felt helpless as a citizen, so as a journalist at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, I threw myself into the task of learning and writing about growth and development and how they connect to transportation, the environment, the design of our communities and similar topics. Over the ensuing decade I helped to create a weekly section that explored those issues, and then joined the paper's editorial board to opine on them. In 2002 I decided to work fulltime with citizens who want to shape the future of their communities, joining Smart Growth America as communications director. As a citizen, journalist or advocate, I've observed countless development issues and watched the dynamics at play. I now firmly believe that an educated, engaged citizenry is an essential corrective to the "specialists" – whether in real estate, engineering, planning or politics – who yield so easily to the temptations of standardization and easy money. It is with that sentiment that my colleagues and I offer this modest contribution.

Preface

Communities can be shaped by choice, or they can be shaped by chance. We can keep on accepting the kind of communities we get, or we can start creating the kind of communities we want. — **Richard Moe, National Trust for Historic Preservation**



Why this guidebook?

In many areas of our lives, change is expected, even welcome. As parents, we thrill to each new phase as our kids advance through the years. Each year we eagerly embrace the change from sweltering summer to cool, colorful autumn, or from the muddy snows of late winter to spring’s warm, aromatic breezes. When unexpected change comes to our neighborhoods, though, most of us find it unsettling.

First come questions about what a proposed development could mean for the character of the area, for quality of life or for property values. Then comes the anxiety of being thrust into the unfamiliar world of planning, zoning and development, with their specialized terminology, dense books of codes and confusing array of meetings and decision points. In dealing with local officials and developers—and their lawyers and consultants—who regularly inhabit this world, citizens must educate themselves quickly, not just about the approval process, but about what they can reasonably hope to get from it.

This publication is intended as a quick-start guide to help citizens get up to speed on the terms, procedures and key issues in development. This effort is motivated by one central belief: **The surest way to create neighborhoods, towns and metropolitan regions worthy of passing on to our children is to engage the full, informed participation of the people who live in them. It is our hope that, by leveling the playing field for citizens even a little bit, we can help make planning and development more collaborative and less adversarial.**

That is perhaps more important today than ever before. Over the last decade, people all across the country have grown increasingly worried about the consequences of rapid growth and poorly planned development. In search of a better way, many of those concerned citizens have been working with forward-looking professionals in planning, design, real estate and related fields to figure out how to be smarter about growth. *(See Chapter 2 for more on these efforts.)*

Who is behind this publication?

Smart Growth America, the organization primarily responsible for the content of this guidebook, is one outgrowth of that conversation. SGA is a coalition of roughly 100 national, state and local organizations working to improve the ways we plan and build our cities. The coalition includes many of the best-known national organizations advocating on behalf of historic preservation, the environment, farmland and open space preservation, neighborhood revitalization and more. Chances are, one of our state- or regional-level members is working in your own back yard to save treasured landscapes while making towns and cities more livable and lovable.

Indeed, our members work with citizens every day of the year to improve poorly conceived developments, preserve our built and natural heritage, fight for high-quality neighborhoods, expand choices in housing and transportation and promote fairness for people of all backgrounds. Through long experience, we have come to understand that merely saying “no” rarely succeeds, for

reasons we will examine in the pages to come. **The trick is knowing what we’re willing to say “yes” to, so that decisions about growth become a win for current and future residents and the larger metro area, as well as for land owners and developers.**

You don’t have to be an expert to understand good planning and design. With a modest amount of background information, ordinary citizens can make, and have made, very smart contributions to development decisions—when they are invited into the process. In fact, planning and design are most likely to fail when people are kept in the dark and left out of the process until the end.

Using this guidebook as a starting point, you can learn how to turn inevitable change to the advantage of your community. You can become an advocate for top-quality design and the amenities that will improve life for you, your neighbors and the larger community.

We hope to make this a living document that responds to lessons about what works and what doesn’t. To that end, we heartily invite your comments on the usefulness of this guidebook, along with your ideas on how to improve it.



To learn more, please visit our web site at:
<http://smartgrowthmamerica.org>

Introduction. Using the Guidebook

The fact that you are reading this guidebook already marks you as a special sort of citizen: the kind of person who cares enough about your neighborhood, town or metro area to go to some trouble to help make it better. Because most people either cannot or simply choose not to become engaged, your potential influence may be stronger than you realize.

Choosing Our Community's Future is designed to help you get oriented quickly and to give you some ideas about how to help shape growth and development in your area. This is necessarily a general overview. If you need to go deeper into a particular area, you'll find references to help you do so. Likewise, because this document is designed to apply throughout the country, you will want to find more localized information, as well. There are leads here to help you do that.

Many resources out there focus mostly on how to kill a project you don't like. This handbook is about assisting you and your fellow citizens in choosing something to be in favor of. It's a powerful and proven strategy for dealing with development proposals. Even better, the lessons learned here from your fellow citizens can help turn initial concern and worry into a reason to hope, and provide motivation to stay involved in making your community better.

What you'll find here

There are other guidebooks that might be more helpful in grappling with proposals for certain high-impact land uses, such as landfills, highways, prisons, garbage transfer stations or airport expansions. This book is designed more to help citizens come to terms with, and improve, more conventional planning and development processes.

Some of the issue areas include:

- **Superstores or "big box" centers.** These are retail developments that, because of their disposable nature and high local impact, warrant special consideration. We'll help you judge when, where and how to push to improve and/or transform such proposals.
- **Infill.** Development on previously vacant or under-used land in already built-up areas is, in principle,

environmentally and economically desirable, but it must be done right. This book illustrates what that can mean.

- **Mixed use.** Projects that incorporate, say, both shops and housing, or offices and retail are growing in popularity. Vigilant citizens—that’s you—can help make sure they are well-integrated with existing neighborhoods.
- **Mixed housing types.** Neighborhoods that include both affordable and higher-end homes, and/or a mix of houses, townhouses, condominiums, etc. used to be the norm. They’re on the comeback, but how do we make them fit well in today’s world?
- **Redevelopment.** Bringing new life to dead malls, former industrial sites or blighted city blocks can be a bonus, but citizen input is vital. Use this book to help you make sure yours is heard.
- **Greenfield development.** When new development occurs on farm, forest or other open land, as most of it does, those resources are gone for good. How do you decide when such growth is appropriate, and push for change when it isn’t?
- **Community planning.** Too often, “public involvement” in planning for growth and change is limited to a couple of obligatory meetings. But informed, determined citizens

almost always can find a way not only to have a say in local plans, but also to make sure they are implemented.

We begin in Chapter 1 with a discussion of the evolving—and critical—role of citizens in planning for change in their communities. We also discuss some of the key principles to think about in guiding new development, a set of concepts sometimes grouped together as “smart growth”. The chapter also includes a sample checklist that you can use for evaluating proposed projects.

Chapter 2 gives a (we hope) mercifully brief overview of the concepts and terminology involved with planning and zoning, as well as some insight into how developers and their projects usually work. There’s a quick-start to-do list for getting the information you’ll need, and an inspirational piece from some longtime neighborhood activists on “what neighborhoods should fight for.”

From there we offer some tips and references in Chapter 3 that will be helpful in evaluating the potential impacts of development. Because environmental effects and associated rules can be especially complex, Chapter 4 focuses exclusively on that topic.

The “True Stories” section toward the end tells some tales from the planning and development front that we think offer some helpful lessons, both uplifting and painful.

Chapter 1. Key principles for managing change

To grow “smart” means **involving citizens** in choosing a future that **provides housing options** for people of all incomes and ages; **protects farmland** and open space; **revitalizes neighborhoods** and offers a variety of convenient options for getting around.



In the decades since World War II, when America’s sprawling growth really took off, communities across the country have experienced increasingly destructive battles between two camps: the advocates of growth at any cost and a reactionary no-growth movement.

The any-growth-is-good-growth camp accepted development in whatever form it came. If that meant neighborhoods had to be split apart, fundamentally changed or destroyed, that was the price of progress. This view held sway in most places until the 1970s and ‘80s, when a backlash emerged against the disruptions from unchecked highway building, urban renewal projects that eliminated entire neighborhoods and badly planned suburban development. Over time, no-growth activists developed myriad techniques for slowing or halting unwanted projects, using environmental laws, administrative procedures, public protests and the courts.

The result of all this fighting is that today “planning” in most communities is aimed at avoiding lawsuits and other trouble, rather than laying the groundwork for a better future.

Because development ideas so rarely arise from a shared vision of what the community wants and needs, nearly every development decision results in conflict. Neighborhood residents are taken by surprise by projects they couldn’t have foreseen, and rise up in anger. By the same token, responsible developers who submit proposals based on existing plans and zoning can find themselves engulfed in expensive, bitter and time-consuming battles. Local governments, for their part, are in a constant scramble to find the money to keep up with roads, sewer and water lines, police and fire protection, parks, libraries and other services AFTER development occurs, instead of before.

Growth is rarely stopped altogether, of course. It is merely made more expensive or driven out to farms and natural areas. Most people don’t want to stop genuine economic growth, or penalize their children by making it impossible to build new homes for them, or force development into precious environmental or agricultural resources. By the 1990s, many people had come to realize that merely waiting in fear for new growth-related



proposals to come was not getting our communities what we wanted.

At around the same time in the mid-1990s, people advocating on behalf of the environment, historic preservation, transportation choices, housing affordability and others came to realize that simply saying “no” wouldn’t work. They began to talk with like-minded planners, developers, architects, government officials and others about how to plan for economic and population growth in a way that made communities stronger as they grew. This new approach would aim to improve quality of life for people and limit the unwanted side effects of poorly managed growth, from environmental destruction to hours wasted in traffic to plain old ugliness.



Many people refer to this idea of people-oriented planning ahead as smart growth. You’ll also hear people use other terms that mean the same, or nearly the same thing, such as quality growth, sustainable development, smart planning. Many people also use “new urbanism” interchangeably with smart growth (For more on new urbanism, see the box, page 7)



The legacy of poor planning

Smart growth has come to be defined by a set of 10 principles, which we’ll explore in some detail in a moment. First, though, it might be helpful to remember why this new approach to planning and development is so necessary.

People often refer to the typical way development has happened in recent years as “sprawl”, which literally means that cities and their suburbs have tended to spread out in haphazard fashion, at a rapid and accelerating rate. In many places this has destroyed

In a recent survey of county officials nationwide, 85 percent noted that most new housing in their county is geared to middle- and upper-income households, not working families ...

some of our best farm and forest land and altered irreplaceable landscapes forever. Commute and driving hassles are growing because jobs are being placed in areas that are nowhere near housing that is affordable to middle-class, working people.

Unfortunately, in most communities today development decisions are made on an *ad hoc* basis; that is, our local officials make it up as they go along. The frustrating thing is that most cities, towns and suburbs go through the motions of making plans, but very few local governments actually follow them consistently. Instead, they react to development proposals, or to citizen hostility toward such proposals.

Chaotic development—what some refer to as sprawl—is the almost inevitable result: Roads don’t connect, so other streets become clogged with extra traffic. Look-alike strip centers and their parking lots come to dominate the landscape. Sidewalks, when they exist, stop at the very arterial roads where they’re needed most. And housing gets more and more expensive as developers take the path to certain approval and easy money by proposing only expensive housing. (Indeed, in a recent survey of county officials nationwide, 85 percent noted that most new housing in their county is geared to middle- and upper-income households, not working families, according to the National Association of County Officials.)

Our choices, our future

For a long time many people just accepted these outcomes as a fact of life. Increasingly, though, citizens all over the country are starting to demand something better. They don't want to stop growth. They want to have a say in how it happens. They want to know that there's a good plan that's fair to everyone, and that the plan means something. They want to be smart about growth.

The planning ideas that became known as smart growth started by asking how our communities can get less of what we don't want and more of what we do. In our work around the country, we have found that people generally agree on what they'd like to see:

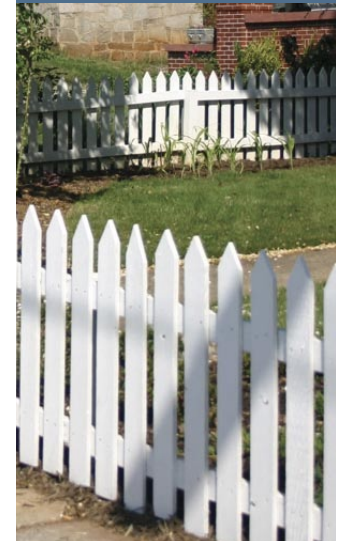
- 1. A seat at the table for everyone with a stake in the community.** This is basic fairness in American democracy. Development decisions should be open and transparent and not the result of backroom deals.
- 2. Plentiful choices among safe, convenient and attractive neighborhoods.** Great quality of life begins with neighborhoods, though one size doesn't fit all. With today's sprawl, some neighborhoods are safe but not convenient, others are convenient but not affordable, while many affordable neighborhoods are not safe. There's no reason we can't have all the qualities we want in our neighborhoods.
- 3. Ready access to jobs, daily necessities and fun, with less time in traffic.** Jobs near housing, housing near jobs. People who want to drive should be able to. But you shouldn't be a prisoner in your car because of bad planning and design. And whether or not you are able to drive or afford a car, you should still be able to get around.
- 4. Thriving cities, suburbs and towns.** Keep the local economy strong. Meet the needs of existing

communities before spending money to promote development in new territory. Investments in transportation, schools, libraries, parks and other public services should go first to the places people already live. New development should make the most of previous investments in those things.

- 5. Preserving what's best about the places we live.** Clean air and water. Beautiful vistas and historic places. Farms and forest lands. Parks and recreational areas.
- 6. Lower personal costs and efficient use of our tax money.** Households shouldn't be forced to overspend on transportation. Taxpayer money shouldn't be wasted by government failure to make efficient use of existing infrastructure, schools and public services.
- 7. A shot at the American dream of opportunity for all.** Any child, no matter where he or she lives, should have access to good schools, a safe environment and opportunities for advancement.

Balancing all these values is tough and involves a series of trade-offs. Often, though, trade-offs are made without conscious thought or planning. For example, for years we built our communities and transportation networks in ways that encouraged people to drive for everything, and only later realized the impact on the quality of the air we breathe. At bottom, smart growth means weighing the trade-offs involved in development in order to make an informed choice, rather than simply letting things happen and complaining afterward. The goal is to ensure that growth improves, rather than degrades quality of life, but without limiting economic opportunity.

The goal is to **manage growth** so that it improves, rather than degrades **quality of life**, but without shutting down economic growth.





Ten Principles of Smart Growth

- 1 Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective.
- 2 Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- 3 Provide a variety of transportation options.
- 4 Strengthen existing communities and direct development towards them.
- 5 Preserve natural beauty, parks, farmland and environmentally critical areas.
- 6 Create complete neighborhoods where daily needs are close at hand.
- 7 Create a safe, inviting environment for walking
- 8 Foster distinctive communities with a strong sense of place.
- 9 Make efficient use of public investments in infrastructure, schools and services.
- 10 Put jobs and good schools within reach of all who need them.

The principles of smart growth

You might hear some people say that “smart growth means different things to different people.” That’s true in the sense that state and local communities are free to implement their “smart” plans as they see fit. Nevertheless, the central principles discussed here are almost universally recognized as defining smart growth, and they have been embraced not only by many of the nation’s key conservation, environmental, historic preservation, affordable housing, business and other organizations, but also by the national associations of planners, developers, Realtors®, local



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

After citizens in **Walnut Creek, CA**, rebelled against plans to develop around their rail transit station, officials went back to the drawing board, this time with residents’ input. The process, known as a charette, designed a project that brought needed affordable housing and shopping, but added only 5% more cars to the busiest road, allaying citizens’ worst fear. (For more on this story, see page Chapter 5.)

government officials and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (For a partial list of endorsing organizations visit <http://smartgrowth.org/sgn/partners.asp>.)

The basic smart growth principles listed here were designed to help citizens in choosing a future that provides housing options for people of all incomes and ages; protects farmland and open space; revitalizes neighborhoods and offers a variety of options for getting around. Below are illustrations of each of the principles. To learn more about the many strategies available to implement them, please see *Getting to Smart Growth*, volumes I and II, available at <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/publications.htm>

Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective

The current system of development in most places is unfair to citizens kept too much in the dark. It also can be unfair to developers who want to do “smart-growth” projects, and it often puts public officials in the untenable position of having to compromise the future in favor of near-term election prospects. Fairness to citizens means they should be involved in creating visions for their neighborhoods, towns and metro areas and meaningful plans to implement them. They should hear about development proposals at the earliest possible moment and be given input into their design. Fairness to developers means that proposals that comply with the spirit and the letter of community plans should be able to avoid excessive red tape. It means leveling the playing field so that smart growth becomes as easy to develop as sprawl, or ideally, easier. Fairness to public officials means creating an open, trusted process that shields them from undue pressure from deep-pocketed developers and from neighbors’ suspicion and hostility when they make choices to benefit the larger community.



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

When **Oregon** adopted a statewide planning law in 1973, it put some land off-limits to developers, but it also made it much easier to build in designated growth areas. Citizens and developers all have a clear idea about where growth is appropriate. By law, developers building in those areas get speedier approvals. The result: A vibrant city, complete with streetcars, and working landscapes only minutes away.

Create a range of housing opportunities and choices

A central goal of smart-growth principles is to expand the range of choice in housing, in style, price and location. Homes for the people who live, work and play in our metropolitan regions should be both affordable and accessible to jobs and essential services. It follows that job centers and transit stations should have the highest concentrations of housing. Across the region, each jurisdiction should accommodate owner-occupied, rental and low-income housing in a mix that doesn’t disadvantage any community. Because not everyone

“It’s about thinking and **acting to create neighborhoods**—whether in the city, in existing suburbs or in newly developed areas—with **housing, employment, schools, houses of worship, parks, services, shopping centers** close enough that a kid can **walk and ride their bikes** wherever they go, without asking us for a ride every 10 minutes.”

– Hugh McColl, chairman, Bank of America

The Five Tests of Smart Growth

(Adapted from the North Carolina Smart Growth Alliance)

- 1 Popsicle Test:** Can you walk home from the store before your popsicle melts? Can most daily needs be met by walking or biking?
- 2 Smooch Test:** Is the place comfortable, safe, attractive, and intimate, suitable for a date-night stroll? Are people—and their ears—shielded from high-speed car traffic? Would you feel good about taking a visitor there?
- 3 Kid Test:** Can children safely explore a world beyond their own backyards? Can older kids get around on their own, safely developing a sense of self-reliance and autonomy?
- 4 Seniors Test:** Are elder citizens a welcome part of the mix of residents? Are they engaged and active? Can they get out and about and get their needs met when driving is no longer an option?
- 5 Commons Test:** Does the development contribute to the overall community something greater than what it takes in terms of natural and community resources? Will it age gracefully and adapt to future uses, or is it designed to be disposable? What does it leave for future generations?



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

Reviving some of the best features of classic neighborhoods from the early 20th century, the **Kentlands** neighborhood in **Maryland** features a mix of housing types: single-family homes of all sizes, townhomes, apartments, and even “granny flats” such as this one, located above a garage. Singles, young families, retirees and home-based entrepreneurs can all find spaces that fit their needs.

needs the same kind of housing at every stage of life, people should have options including houses, condominiums, apartment buildings of varying sizes, homes affordable to low and moderate incomes, “granny flats”, and owner-occupied two- and three-family homes.

Provide a variety of transportation options

Most of us like to think of America as a land of choices. Yet in just about any community built in the last 50 years, when it comes to transportation there is only one choice: to own a car and use it for every single activity of the day. The main reason is that we have built major highways first, then let

development happen in haphazard, disconnected fashion, rather than deciding how our communities should grow and then providing transportation. To give people an alternative to spending more and more time in traffic, it will be necessary to provide better, more efficient public transportation systems and allow homes and businesses to cluster around them. We also can reduce the need to travel by locating some housing, stores and offices within walking distance of each other. We also should build networks of calm, “complete” streets that accommodate cars but also allow for people to bike and walk in safety and comfort, when they choose to.



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

Street-level trains, known as light rail, have grown increasingly popular, and nowhere more than in **Denver**. In 2004 voters approved a 119-mile expansion of their system along with other transport improvements. Denverites see development oriented around a high-quality transit system as a way to accommodate 1 million new residents without ruining their prized quality of life.

The New Urbanism

Many people use the term “new urbanism” interchangeably with smart growth. The two concepts have much in common, since both aim to create walkable, well-designed neighborhoods, towns and metros. The new urbanism was begun in the late 1980s and early 1990s by architects and urban designers who wanted to blend the design ideas that created some of our classic, pre-war neighborhoods with modern needs, such as accommodating automobiles. Andres Duany, Peter Calthorpe and other early new urbanists took lessons from beloved places like Charleston to develop the technical expertise needed to create complete neighborhoods with a variety of home types, convenient shopping, parks and community space. Though their built projects have proved enormously popular, new urbanists have had to struggle to get each project approved. That’s because everything from zoning to banking practices mandate a one-size-fits-all style of development, making it all but illegal to design in the style of some of our most cherished places. One goal of smart growth is to change policies and practices to make it easier to meet the clear market demand for what new-urbanist designers would like to build.

For more information, contact the Congress for the New Urbanism via their website at <http://cnu.org>.

For an introductory, online tour of new urbanism, please visit: <http://cnu.org/about/index.cfm?formaction=tour2>



“In [the traditional New England town], one can live above the store, next to the store, five minutes from the store or nowhere near the store, and it is easy to imagine the different age groups and personalities that would prefer each alternative. In this way and others, the traditional neighborhood provides for an array of lifestyles. In conventional suburbia, there is only one available lifestyle: to own a car and to need it for everything.”

—Andres Duany, a founder of new urbanism, in “Suburban Nation”



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

Every community has something great to build on—but sometimes it takes some imagination to see existing conditions as assets. **Providence, Rhode Island** spent a decade uncovering the three rivers beneath its streets, reconnecting the city with arched bridges and creating the central WaterPlace park. Now visitors come from all over, drawn by the waterfront walks, great restaurants, and Waterfire, when the river becomes an enormous hearth.

Strengthen existing communities and direct development towards them

By encouraging development in existing cities, towns and suburbs, communities benefit from a stronger tax base, closer proximity of a range of jobs and services, more efficient use of already-developed land and infrastructure and reduced development pressure in edge areas, thereby preserving more open space. However, because it is so much easier to develop on “green fields” at the fringe—land is cheaper and easier to obtain and zoning usually is looser—communities must consciously work to change the incentives to encourage development where they want it and discourage it elsewhere. This typically means allowing higher densities in targeted areas and reducing or eliminating subsidies for development outside growth areas. Smart-growth practitioners have developed a number of mechanisms to do this and are developing still more. Please see *Getting to Smart Growth*, volumes I and II, available at <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/publications.htm>

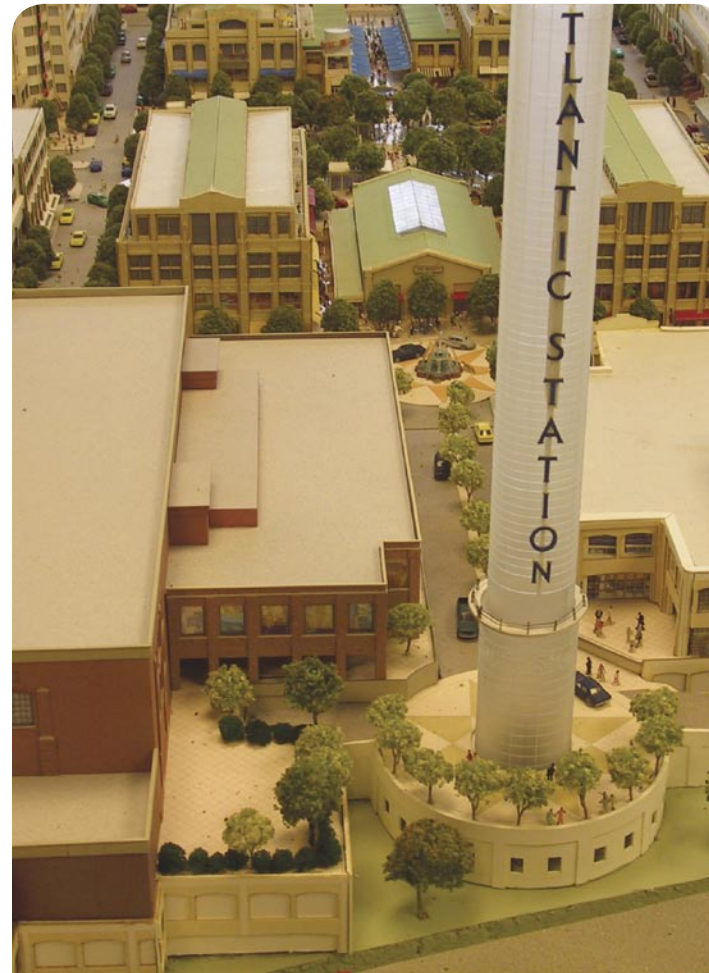
Preserve natural beauty, parks, farmland and environmentally critical areas

In many cases, this means buying land outright, especially if it is to be accessible for public use. However, because no government has the resources to buy all the land that should be protected, communities must use a number of techniques to preserve land while ensuring that owners aren’t unduly burdened. These can range from partnering with private, non-profit land trusts to offering tax breaks for working farms to remain as farms, to purchasing the development rights without actually buying the land. While most cost money, all require forethought and a consensus to act.



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

Barton Springs is part of the Edwards Aquifer, the source of drinking water for more than 1.5 million people in **Austin, Texas**. Barton Springs has always been one of the places that makes Austin special, but in the early 1990's, nearby construction began to pollute the water. Austinites showed their appreciation for the Springs by approving a bond for land purchases to protect the water, wildlife and beauty for future generations.



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

By putting compatible uses like homes, offices, shops and schools all in one neighborhood, you can make life a lot more convenient and reduce the number of car trips we need to take every day. That's the whole idea behind Atlantic Station, a new development near **Atlanta's** Mid-town, where a central area of shops and offices is surrounded by all kinds of homes—apartments, condominiums and houses.

A growing body of research is showing that we have all but engineered walking out of our lives, with predictable health consequences. The problem is we stopped arranging our neighborhoods and designing our streets for safe, pleasant and efficient walking.



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

The I'On neighborhood outside **Charleston** has many features that set it apart from other new developments. Chief among them is the street design. Sidewalks, generous planting strips with street trees, narrow lanes that discourage speeding and welcoming porches combine to create a space that works for cars, pedestrians and kids on bikes.

Create complete neighborhoods where daily needs are close at hand

The best way to make the neighborhoods where we live and work more convenient is to create a vibrant mix of offices, shops and housing. Having a strong customer base within walking distance can support a diverse mix of the restaurants, grocers, coffee shops, dry cleaners and the like that most of us visit day in and day out. This really is nothing more than the traditional Main Street design, where shops might have apartments or offices above, parking is mostly tucked out of sight and residential streets with a mix of large and small homes are within a comfortable walk. Locating this kind of development near rail stations makes them even more convenient. Putting the pieces of the neighborhood together again requires a fresh approach to zoning, which today carves out a separate district for each and every use and for every housing type and price range, linking them only by car trips.

Create a safe, inviting environment for walking

If you're 40 or older, chances are high that you walked to school. Why, then, do so few of our own children walk to school today? And it's not just the kids. A growing body of research is showing that we have all but engineered walking out of our lives, with predictable health consequences. The problem is we stopped arranging our neighborhoods and designing our streets for safe, pleasant and efficient walking.

Designing streets that work for both cars and pedestrians means creating an interconnected network of streets, alley-ways and trails that offer multiple, direct routes to destinations. It means using myriad traffic-calming techniques to prevent speeding and allow safe crossings. It requires not just sidewalks, but also path-shading street trees, pocket parks and other amenities. In commercial areas, on-



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

As an aging suburb, **Smyrna, GA**, never had much of a downtown, and what it did have was lost to a road widening. Wanting a center for their town, the mayor and council launched a bold effort to concentrate government functions, library and homes around a new town square, which has attracted shopping and yet more housing to this new “Main Street”. The result: a new gathering spot and source of civic pride and identity.

street parking shields pedestrians from traffic, while bringing the building up to the sidewalk saves people from having to cross hot, ugly, and potentially dangerous parking lots. And there’s safety in numbers: the more people who are out and about, the more “eyes on the street” to spot any trouble.

Foster distinctive communities with a strong sense of place

Cities and towns built before World War II each have distinct layouts, architecture, housing styles and neighborhoods,

depending on the region of the country, climate, traditions, history and local cultures. But today, it would be hard to tell a new development in, say, Atlanta from one in Dallas or San Diego. Why is that? The emergence of national-scale retailers, builders and developers is part of the reason, but there are other explanations, as well. Most cities and towns, too, have adopted national standards for everything from streets to schools. But local communities do have the option to make development adapt to their own needs and desires, rather than the other way around, if citizens insist on it and governments plan for it. For tools, see ... what’s best resource? Constance’s work?



THE PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE...

They don’t build ‘em like this anymore, and too many places tear them down. The city of **Decatur, GA**, however, has decided to keep its classic, neighborhood schools such as Oakhurst Elementary (above) rather than build new schools on sites that would be hard for kids to get to on foot or bike.



Make efficient use of public investments in infrastructure, schools and services.

Smart, well-planned development decisions save taxpayers money and allow governments to stretch their dollars farther, even as they make it possible for households to spend less on expenses such as transportation. Making the most efficient use of taxpayer investments in roads, water and sewer systems and services from police to fire fighting stretches taxpayer dollars farther. These days, many places are over-investing in subsidizing new sprawl development,

even as they dramatically under-invest in maintenance, repair and upgrading of infrastructure in existing areas. The costs of sprawl and benefits of smart growth have been well documented (for more information, please see Brookings report at http://www.brookings.edu/metro/publications/200403_smartgrowth.htm). By emphasizing strategies such as the revitalization of depressed areas, the reuse of aging buildings, redevelopment of dying strip centers and development of vacant and abandoned properties, smart-growth practices build the tax base for the benefit of both city and suburb dwellers. And there is mounting evidence that metro areas with smart-growth attributes—healthy central cities and inner suburbs, excellent transportation networks, vibrant centers and neighborhoods—have stronger economies.

How do you know if it's smart growth?

Those are the big-picture ideas behind smart growth. But how do you know if projects or plans proposed for your area are “smart”? The scorecard that follows is an attempt to help you make your own assessment. Answering some of the questions might require asking some probing questions of the developer or his consultant team, pressing planning officials for answers or, if that fails, seeking your own consulting expertise. But if you've read this far, clearly you're not afraid to do a little investigating!

How do you know if it's "smart" growth?

A PARTIAL SCORECARD

The following scorecard is offered as one suggested way that a community can evaluate whether new development will be an overall benefit. It was adapted from a tool developed by the state of Maryland to judge whether plans and proposals meet standards under the state's Smart Growth program.

The criteria reflect the three goals of steering development *toward* land designated locally as appropriate for development and *away from* designated agricultural, open space, cultural and environmentally sensitive areas, and ensuring that development makes *efficient use* of land. Each criterion can be rated as "poor", "good", "very good" or "excellent".

Location

- The project location reinforces and logically extends existing and planned development.
- The project redevelops a brownfield¹ site or a site/location receiving state or local assistance to support redevelopment.

Public services and infrastructure

- The proposal uses existing or planned water and sewer lines.
- The proposal aligns with existing and planned school capacity.
- The proposal uses existing or planned road capacity, without overtaxing it.
- The proposal makes use of existing or planned public transportation service.

Compactness and efficiency

- The density is appropriate to the location (for example, a minimum of 10 units/acre for bus service, 20 or more for areas adjacent to rail stations)²
- Site area devoted to parking is minimized, and any surface parking is behind or beside buildings.

¹"Brownfield" refers to former industrial or polluted land that could be reclaimed for development.

²TD





SMART GROWTH SCORECARD (continued)

- Development is clustered to provide the same or higher density with large areas of open space.

Diversity of use

- The project provides a mix of land uses or, for single use projects, adds to the diversity of uses within 1/2 mile.
- Different uses or types are physically mixed in the project or within the adjacent (1/4 mile radius) neighborhood.

Housing diversity

- The project provides different housing types and/or increases the diversity of housing options in the immediate (1/4 mile) neighborhood.
- The project provides a variety of housing prices affordable to different income levels and/or increases the diversity of housing prices in the immediate (1/4 mile) neighborhood.
- Housing types and/or price levels are physically mixed in the project or within the immediate adjacent neighborhood.
- At least 10% of the residential units provided are affordable to those making less than median income, or are at a price level or type that meets an explicitly stated housing goal of the local government.

Transportation & accessibility

- Frequently visited uses are within a half-mile of the proposed project, and are easily accessible to pedestrians. Uses include grocery, other retail, restaurants; school or day care; park, public space or recreation/entertainment; jobs center; other services, such as post office.
- The project provides two or more transportation options (e.g. walk, bike, bus, rail) in addition to the car that are readily available to the majority of people using the project.
- The project road system connects to and logically extends external street and transportation systems at multiple locations.

- The project is located on an existing interconnected street system, or provides an internal street system that is interconnected.
- The proposed or existing streetscape and parking designs are safe and pedestrian friendly.

Community character and design

- Buildings are oriented to maintain or establish a consistent edge from the street.
- Building exterior design are visually interesting, pedestrian friendly and establish or add to area design character.
- Public spaces (community centers, recreational facilities, parks, plazas, open space) are provided and accessible.
- Project maintains or rehabilitates existing structures for continuing use.

Environmental protection

- The project design and location is likely to benefit local air quality (reduces the number and/or length of vehicle trips over conventional, auto-oriented development).
- The project uses “green building” design techniques for site selection, construction and operation practices, energy and water use efficiency, and providing healthy building spaces.
- The project avoids development on wetlands, streams, shorelines and related buffer areas.
- The project avoids development on slopes steeper than 15% or on highly erodible or otherwise unstable soils, on floodplains, or on habitat for threatened or endangered species.
- The project uses design techniques such as clustering and vertical development to avoid sensitive environmental features, minimize development area and/or maximize areas of contiguous open space on site.
- The project relieves development pressure on natural resources on or off site through use of transfer of development rights, long-term protection strategies or other means.



SMART GROWTH SCORECARD (continued)

Stakeholder participation and community development

- Inclusive citizen and stakeholder participation begins early and is conducted throughout the project approval process.
- The proposed project meets identified community and area needs and plans.
- The proposed project positively impacts employment opportunities in the community.
- The project helps to create or maintain a balance of housing and jobs within a 5-mile radius.



Housing Diversity.

This projects includes condominiums and a variety of townhomes. The townhomes, which look like large single-family houses from the street, are all designed to fit in with the existing neighborhood.

Chapter 2. A Citizen's Introduction to Planning, Zoning and Development

2

Planning is a deliberate process of **looking into the future**, predicting how many people are expected to live in the community and identifying where they will live, work, and play. Planning allows us to **design the future we want to see.**



Planning and zoning are terms we've all heard, but because we rarely confront them in our daily lives we might not have a clear idea of what they entail. Simply put, *planning* is a deliberate process of looking into the future, predicting how many people are expected to live in the community and identifying where they will live, work, and play. In other words, planning allows us to design the future we want to see. *Zoning* is the primary means by which local governments can implement that future vision by specifying what gets built and where.

Cities, towns and sometimes counties carve themselves into districts (zones) that clearly specify how land may be used in that particular zone. Historically, zoning became common practice because people wanted to separate their homes from noxious or irritating uses, such as heavy manufacturing or slaughterhouses. The broad categories of zones are *residential*, *commercial*, *industrial* and *agriculture*. Within those categories, different jurisdictions may have several types of zones, including mixed-use districts.

Some of the terminology unique to planning and zoning is intimidating. Here are some basic things to know to unravel the confusion.

- The *General Plan* or *Comprehensive Plan* is a legally adopted community document that reflects the community's vision and long term goals and objectives for the community. A General or Comprehensive Plan can be useful in supporting longer term goals and objectives. They are implemented through the use of zoning codes, development standards and similar legal tools.
- Zones that are designated by a broad category—whether, *residential*, *commercial*, *industrial* or *agricultural*—will allow use of land for those purposes “by right”. In some cases, other land uses may be allowed by special application for a *variance* or *conditional use*. All other uses are prohibited. The zoning specifies not only the use of the land but conditions such as the number of residential units per



You don't have to seem like a pushover. Make it plain that you understand that the developer, even though he's taking some risks, is likely to do very well by building in your neighborhood, and that you expect your neighborhood to do well, too.



acre, the number of square feet of commercial use, and building height limitations.

- As noted above, a variance is needed to allow a change in what is normally allowed under development regulations. For example, you can request a variance to exceed the height limit on a building. Approval would be contingent upon proving that the variance would not harm nearby properties; most states have an established “hardship test” that helps determine this. For example, it is common for special use permits to be approved only for uses that will not have a detrimental impact on their neighborhoods and for variances only in situations that would otherwise impose an undue hardship on a property owner.
- Certain uses, like cemeteries and landfills, don't fit into a particular zone regardless of their design. These special uses require a *special use* or *conditional permit*, and are subject to conditions to protect surrounding properties from any possible negative impacts.
- Most zoning ordinances also include *development standards*, which try to ensure that structures and uses within a zone are compatible. For example, they may prohibit a high-rise from towering over a single family home, or specify a certain distance between buildings.
- Some buildings and uses that existed before a zoning



law was enacted may be in conflict with the current zoning. Such a *nonconformity* is usually allowed to continue but not to expand. For instance, the service station that over time found itself in a residential neighborhood is generally not asked to shut down, but will probably not be allowed to add a convenience store. In this example, the nonconforming property in a residential zone district may continue to operate as is but not expand, and may be converted to a residential use, but not to another nonconforming use.

- A *Planned Unit Development* (PUD) can be used to create a unique development that ‘overlays’ a zone in order to achieve something that is not specifically allowed by the code. Mixed use developments often utilize the PUD process.
- A *Subdivision* is a single large tract of land that is divided into five or more smaller parcels.



Who are the key players and what are their roles in the development review process?

The process for review of development applications varies by type of application and jurisdiction, but a typical scenario might go like this:

Key Player	Role
City Council or County Board	Popularly elected governing body. Adopts laws and zoning ordinances. Has final authority on any changes to zoning ordinances and boundaries.
Planning Commission	Typically, an appointed, volunteer board. The planning commission was originally authorized to assist the council in making decisions about zoning permit applications and modifying nonconformities. Today many commissions have expanded their roles to include review of applications for subdivision approvals and site plan approvals. Additionally, some planning commissions have a community development arm that does revitalization and redevelopment work.
Board of Adjustment or Board of Appeals	Considers applications for variances and other exceptions.
Planning Staff	Receives and reviews planning applications, enforces zoning code, assists appointed and elected officials by providing background information and staff recommendations on submitted land use applications. Often holds pre-application meetings with developers.
Developer	Submits application for a development project. When approvals are achieved, manages the project to completion
Citizens	Raises pertinent questions about potential effects on local quality of life, and shares knowledge about the existing conditions in the surrounding neighborhood. Should be included early in discussions with developers and planning officials.





Developer John has an idea for a mixed-use project including retail stores on the ground floor and loft apartments on the second floor. The land he owns or has an option to purchase is zoned “commercial.” John contacts the local planning department and arranges for a pre-application conference with a staff planner. Planner Jane is assigned the meeting and meets with the developer. Jane listens to John’s idea, reviews the zoning for the parcel, and prepares a pre-application conference summary. The pre-application conference summary outlines what the developer is proposing, what is allowed “by right” under the existing zoning, and what the developers’ options are for submitting an application.

In this case, because the land is zoned only for commercial uses and not for housing, John will have to pursue one of two options. He can ask to create a Planned Unit Development, a special designation for more complex, one-of-a-kind projects, or he can request a rezoning of

his property to allow for the housing units. The approvals would apply only to John’s project.

After John reviews his options, he will submit an application, and pay the appropriate fees as laid out in the zoning code. The zoning code will also have rules for how and when the community must be notified. Often, seeing the posted notices or receiving a letter in the mail is the first time the general public will hear about a project.

Jane will review the application and write a staff memo for the Planning Commission. The memo will describe the project, identify issues and concerns and make a recommendation for approval, approval with conditions, or denial of the project. This recommendation will be based on the zoning code, but also on other community planning documents such as the General Plan that may reflect community values that are not well incorporated into the zoning code. For example, there may be no provisions for a mixed-use development in the zoning code, but the General Plan has goals such as creating *live-work opportunities*, *revitalizing the commercial core*, *reducing auto use*, and creating *pedestrian friendly environments*. These could all be used to support John’s application.

The Planning Commission will review the application at a public hearing. Typically, John will have an opportunity to present his project, Jane will summarize her report, the Commissioners will ask questions, and then the floor will be opened for public comment. Community members are invited to sign up to speak, and are asked to limit their comments, usually to 2 or 3 minutes each. The Commissioners may ask John to provide additional information at another meeting or to address the conditions suggested by Jane.

John will be given some time to address the list of plan changes or actions the Commission has asked of him. When everything appears to have been addressed

Understanding the Development Process

Development projects typically go through five phases. Each phase ends with a decision to continue, change or halt the process. For more information about the development process, ...

Phase I: Concept is the initial weighing of benefits, risks, opportunities, and costs of a project.

Phase II: Feasibility tests the assumptions made during the concept phase. In this phase developers test the market by talking with prospective buyers, tenants, lenders, and partners; pull together preliminary financial statements; identify required government actions; and develop initial architectural plans.

Phase III: Deal-making pulls together all of the pieces into a coherent strategy with financial backing and an available market. The development team is securing necessary government actions or approvals; bidding construction; negotiating final financing; and tying up all the loose ends needed to get to construction.

Phase IV: Project Construction brings the development project to completion. In project construction the development team is marketing to tenants and/or buyers and overseeing construction.

Phase V: Operation or Sale wraps up the development team's involvement.

SOURCES:

Miles, Mike E., Berens, Gayle, and Weiss, Marc A., *Real Estate Development Principles and Process*, Third Edition, Urban Land Institute, Washington, DC 2000
Community Real Estate Development Chart, Development Training Institute, Baltimore Maryland, 1998

“Developers are willing to make compromises if they have to.”

A developer, in his own words ...

Andy Broderick is president of Housing Vermont, a statewide non-profit development company that has developed 3400 units of housing in 15 years.

“What people ought to know is that developers are usually sensitive to their economic constraints, but they are willing to make a lot of compromises if they have to. They don't want to lose a lot of money on appeals, and would just as soon invest in making a community better. If you're a smart developer you usually get out there and offer to address their concerns, because it's usually cheaper in the long run.

If residents start from the assumption that some kind of change is going to happen, and they just want to talk about concerns, I'm more than willing to sit down and talk with them.

It tends to be that people stop communicating right away. It's often the developer's fault, because he just tries to push past the neighbors. But from my experience people too frequently dig in and just say we're against it, it's too big, or it's not what we want, and they just say no.”

Elements of Risk

The development process is fraught with risks to the developer, not all of them financial. As a developer decides whether to go forward, she is considering

- **Economic Risks.** Will the project make money? Will the project meet the needs of the market in terms of pricing?
- **Organizational Risks.** Will the organization's capacity be strained or overwhelmed by the project? How much of the developer's credibility is at stake?
- **Political Risks.** Will the local community oppose the project? Will local politicians oppose or support the project?
- **Social Risks.** Does the project provide for the needs of the community? Will the project be considered an asset or liability to the community?

THE DEVELOPER'S JOB

Have you ever wondered why new development looks pretty much the same wherever you go these days? While standardized zoning codes play a role, the biggest reason is that most developers are trying to reduce the risks of their inherently risky business. The surest way to do that is to sell what someone else has already sold a hundred—or better yet a thousand—times before.

Much of the new housing in this country is built by large-scale developers who mass-produce subdivisions of hundreds or thousands of homes at a time. Whether large or small, developers typically choose sites on open fields and forest land, often at the fringe of town where it is easier to build many units at once. There also are likely to be fewer restrictions on what and how they build there, and little or no community input or opposition. In development, time truly is money—lenders are wary of investing in projects that might encounter costly delays.

Developers who choose to rehabilitate an old warehouse or office building, re-use an old industrial or commercial site, build a walkable Main Street or use vacant or abandoned in-town property are swimming against the tide of their industry.

In doing so they are showing you that

- they want to work in places where there are neighbors and people concerned about the community;
- they might be risking more of their own money to build a type of project that has never been built in your community, or at least not for many decades; and
- they are willing to absorb greater costs and spend more time building their project.

So keep in mind that

- most developers are willing to go to some trouble and expense to have happy neighbors;
- you are most likely to win concessions from a developer if you can save him time and money by being clear early on about what it will take to get you to say “yes”; and
- don't get greedy—there are limits to how much time and money a developer can afford to spend working to make you happy. If your demands start to seem unreasonable, the developer will seek action from local officials or the courts that could leave neighbors out of the deal.

and John's project appears to be headed for approval, the Commissioners will ask that John's project be put on the agenda for the next meeting. At this meeting, John and Jane will show how John has addressed the issues the Commissioners asked him to address, and all parties including the general public will again have an opportunity to speak and voice their support or concerns. If no new concerns are brought forward, the project will be approved. In some jurisdictions, the Planning Commission makes a decision, which can be appealed to City Council or, in some areas, County Commission. In other places, the commission makes a recommendation to City Council, who has the final say.

The Citizen's Role: Affecting the Process

If you are unhappy with a proposal in your community, you may be wondering how you can get involved and make a difference. The opportunities to make a mark depend on where the proposal is in the process, and what is required by the zoning laws for approval. If the land is zoned to allow, say, "big box" commercial and that is what is being proposed, you will have limited opportunities for input. You can object at the public meeting, but a legal right exists to build a big box there.

However, if the land is zoned residential or agricultural, and a big box commercial development is proposed, then you have an opportunity to participate in the planning and zoning process. Through your efforts, you may be able to stop the rezoning, or if all parties (by which we mean neighborhood activists, the local government, and the developer), can reach an agreement, put in place design standards that apply specifically to the project, and request community enhancements from the developer.

Have 2 minutes in front of P&Z and don't know what to say? Here is a sample 2 minute speech

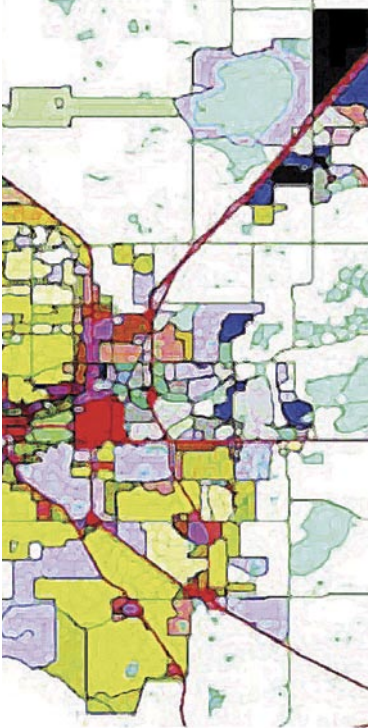
My name is Bob Smith. I live at 123 Maple Street. I am concerned about the Mega-Greens Pharmacy that is proposing to locate on the corner of Apple and Spruce streets. Specifically, these are the issues that I feel need to be addressed:

- 1 The design of the building is not in keeping with the **historic character** of the area. They wish to use the same big-box model they always use, but I feel our community and this area in particular is **unique** and deserves to be **respected and preserved**. I would like the developer to agree to **design standards** that reflect the historic downtown character such as the use of brick.
- 2 The proposed design for the site shows all the parking in front of the building. This will make it **difficult for people walking** to get to the store across the open parking lot. It is also **not consistent** with other buildings in this area, and personally, I think it is **ugly**. I request that the parking be placed to the side and rear of the building, or better yet, underground.
- 3 The site plan shows **four entry points** to the parking lot. I believe this will **increase traffic congestion**, especially along Apple Street where we already see traffic backing up at the light.
- 4 The building plans also show 9 foot tall flood lights throughout the parking lot. I believe that the developer should be asked to use the **historic district lighting** that was approved last year.

Thank you for your time. I appreciate the opportunity to give my opinions about this project.

“It’s a wonderfully empowering experience to shape the destiny of your hometown.”

—Al Norman,
Sprawl-busters.com



If being called **NIMBY** drives you **BANANAs**, just say **MAYBE**

It’s almost inevitable: If you get involved with development battles or other government decisions that affect your neighborhood, sooner or later someone will call you a “NIMBY”.

Literally, they’re calling you a Not in My Backyard, as ungrammatical as that may be. What they actually mean is that you are a narrowly self-interested obstructionist, bent on getting your way, and hang the cost to the rest of society.

Now that hurts. And in most cases it’s just not fair. A little history, though, helps explain why you’re being tarred with that brush.

NIMBY was coined more than 20 years ago to refer to citizens who resist land-use changes that will benefit the larger community but might have negative effects in their immediate neighborhoods. “Yes,” says the so-called NIMBY, “I know we need landfills/public housing/highways—but not in my backyard.”

Though the NIMBY tag is used as a put-down these days, there was a time when these citizens could be seen as heroes, standing up for places they cared about against previously unstoppable government actions, such as ripping apart neighborhoods for a freeway or forcing a hazardous dump on a poor community. These activists succeeding in winning greater public access to decision-making and expanded opportunities for public comment and appeal.

Today many of those vehicles, frankly, are being hijacked by small bands of residents who use them to intimidate local officials into giving them their way on the most picayune issues, down to the size, shape and color of houses other people will buy or rent. Just about every local official has umpteen stories about residents who dominate public meetings and simply scream “no” to anything but what they want, leaving no room for constructive compromise. They’ve even come up with a new tag for them: BANANA, or Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone.

Thanks to these folks, many public officials fear “NIMBY” every time a citizen raises a concern about an issue affecting them. You can put them at ease—and win a sympathetic ear—by sending clear signals that you are raising a small number of rational, important considerations, and that you have specific proposals for how the developer and/or locality can offset any negative impacts.

You don’t have to seem like a pushover. Make it plain that you understand that the developer, even though he’s taking some risks, is likely to do very well by building in your neighborhood, and that you expect your neighborhood to do well, too.

In other words, before anyone can call you a NIMBY, just say MAYBE:
Might Accept You if Bargained Effectively.

By David Goldberg

You should plan to attend every meeting during which the project will be discussed. Although you may not speak during the official discussion between elected or appointed officials, they will provide a time for you to speak. If a time is not offered, request it. Be prepared to speak concisely as your time will be limited. Here are some tips for effective use of your allotted time.

- Be prepared. Come with a prepared 2 minute speech which highlights the critical issues.
- If there is more information than can effectively be covered in 2 minutes, organize with other like-minded individuals to cover all issues. Perhaps you can address traffic issues, someone else can address affordable housing concerns, and so on.
- Use the General Plan or other documents from your jurisdiction to bolster your case. In addition, use information from national organizations, such as Smart Growth America, to provide you with supporting documentation. *(To find an organization close to you, see Appendix A).*
- Be concise and clear. Avoid rambling or emotional speeches.

Even if everyone except the developer agrees that the project is terrible, if it is allowed by your local zoning ordinance, the developer has a legal right to develop. In this case, you can still participate in the planning process to effect long-term change. In fact, your participation in community planning can improve not just a single project, but ultimately the community as a whole. There are many ways to get involved, for example:

- Volunteer for a city-wide board or committee;



Even if everyone except the developer agrees that the project is terrible, if it is allowed by your local zoning ordinance, the developer has a legal right to develop.

- Join or initiate a neighborhood or home owners association;
- Form a citizens group to monitor and/or influence planning and development;
- Testify at hearings in support of projects that are well-designed and are compatible with the vision of the community;
- Testify at hearings encouraging smart growth principles to be incorporated into zoning ordinances, Community Plans, and new development projects.

Where Do I Start?

Six questions to answer when developing a comprehensive plan

A comprehensive establishes aims to shape many aspects of development at once: transportation, infrastructure, housing, economic development, parks, and other elements.

1) What other planning efforts are under way?

Your local planning effort might be part of a larger planning exercise. Check with your local Metropolitan Planning Organization or council of governments to see if there is a regional or transportation planning effort.

2) Does my locality sponsor citizen planning courses?

More and more local governments are sponsoring introductory courses on land use planning for citizens, and they're worth taking. If your locality does not sponsor these courses, see if the local community college or chamber of commerce has information to get you started, or check the resources in the back of this book.

3) What are the underlying zoning and entitlements for properties in the area being planned?

It is important to know what can be built "by right" under existing zoning or covenant system. These "entitlements" guide what land owners and developers can do without approvals from the local government. Changing these may involve offering incentives to developers to accommodate your plan.

4) What are the local rules on citizen engagement?

Most communities now have established procedures on input from citizens and other "stakeholders" (local businesses, transportation and social equity advocates, real estate interests, etc.). Establish what the rules are early in the process, and take advantage of them.

5) Who is/are the key decision makers?

In some areas, the planning commission has the power to make zoning or plan changes. In other areas, the planning commission is advisory in nature and the final decisions are made by an elected board. It's important to understand at the beginning where ultimate authority rests.

6) Who are the other stakeholders and what is their stake?

Any planning effort must balance often-competing interests, from a local government's need for tax revenue to business concerns to neighborhood quality

Whom can I trust and how do I verify what I am told?

The staff at your local Planning Department are trained professionals and can be presumed to have the best interest of the community at heart. After all, they work there and probably live there too. As responsible professionals they are bound by the zoning code and answer to the Planning Director, and ultimately to the Mayor and the City Council. They are a great resource and are usually happy to direct you to the information available.

The best way to get the information you want is to become educated and knowledgeable about your local

The best way to get the information you want is to **become educated and knowledgeable about your local General Plan and your Zoning Code. Know your General Plan** and use it to your advantage.



General Plan and your Zoning Code. Know your General Plan and use it to your advantage. Review these documents with an eye towards how they relate to the project that interests you, and how you can encourage a better project by reminding the elected and appointed officials of the tenets of these documents.

Another good place to start is with a copy of the pre-application conference summary and staff memos on the project. All this is public record and is available to you at the Planning office for the cost of the photo copies. The Zoning Code and General Plan are often available on-line, or the planning staff will let you review a copy on site. Although you don't need the entire document, if you really feel you must have it, you can purchase a copy of the code.

Local and national groups that support smart growth principles may also be able to assist you. They can direct you to web sites, case studies, legal verdicts and other resources which may enhance your understanding of the situation and bolster your position.

Innovations in Planning and Zoning

Most of the zoning codes adopted by local governments prevent the development of traditional, walkable neighborhoods with a mix of retail, office, and residential uses since zoning typically provides only for a single land use. In response, planners, architects, and developers have created a new code, often called a form-based code or "smart code", as an alternative zoning model.

The form-based code describes the kind of neighborhood or district that is intended, which could be anything from a tree-lined Main Street to a houses-only hamlet to a dense office district. The goal is to have each new development contribute to the overall character

of life. Understanding each constituency's needs can help citizen activists develop options to meet many of those needs while mitigating any impacts.

Five questions to answer when evaluating a proposed project

Individual projects range in size from an individual building, up to a "new town". Either way, there are a couple of first steps you should think about.

1) What is really being proposed?

Many times citizens first learn of a project by word of mouth, the posting of zoning notice or item in a newspaper. Before deciding whether to support or oppose a proposal, visit the local planning department and ask to see any submittals from the developer. If possible, talk to the staff planner assigned to the project. Learn as much detail as possible from direct sources.

2) What is the underlying zoning?

Find out what the developer can do "by right" under existing zoning and other entitlements, including not only use, but also parking spaces, setbacks, and design.

3) What does the comprehensive plan say?

Most jurisdictions have comprehensive plans, born of many hours of citizens' labor, that are meant to consider how all the pieces fit together once buildings are built. If the proposed project works against some or all of the plan's goals, citizens can make a strong argument for changes or denial.

4) Is the developer asking for a variance?

However well you plan, you can't foresee every contingency. For some projects, developers need to ask for a zoning variance. Common requests include increasing or decreasing setbacks, varying building heights or changes to rules on landscaping. In the end, the decision should rest on how the project will fit in and work, not on narrow legal definitions.

5) Have any conditions been placed on the project?

Local planning and zoning offices often establish conditions when developers seek project approval. Some conditions are placed during the construction phase, such as restricted hours and the timing of deliveries. Other relate to operations and are in effect as long as the building is in use.

What to Fight For: A Citizens View

The following section was written by Melissa Bondi, Tom Petty and Veronica Freeman, longtime civic activists in Arlington Virginia.

The list below is guided by a few core themes. First, know what you want, as well as what you don't. We found that the best way to get change we liked was to begin with an idea of what that might be.

Most important: You should never doubt that you have a critical role to play in shaping your community. Nobody knows the rhythm of a neighborhood better than the people who live there. Planning that excludes citizens is bad planning, pure and simple.

Here is what we believe neighborhoods should fight for:

1) Defining What's Important in Your Neighborhood. What are the "must-keep" features of your community? What are the elements that should define it in the future? Key features of livability, such as parks, the preservation of historic landmarks, ecologically and esthetically critical green spaces should be established first, not as an afterthought.

2) A Place at the Table And a Voice in the Plan. Residents should not be invited into the process just to check off a box for satisfying a public outreach requirement. Asking all stakeholders what they want can reveal many development options.

3) A Longterm Commitment to the Principles in the Plan. A land use plan is a vision for a neighborhood

with pieces that fit together. But, land use plans are only as good as the commitment made to them by local officials, developers, residents and the business community. Expect to stay in for the long haul, and push your local government to do so, despite turnover among politicians.

4) Good, Durable Design. While neighbors must understand that real estate developers are in the business of developing projects, making a profit, and moving on, developers must understand that residents are in the business of staying for the long term. Residents have a right to fight for building, street and neighborhood designs that will age well and be adaptable over time.

5) A Commitment to Govern the Growth to Come. The implementation of land use plans involves a lot of compromise and deals along the way to make the new density fit in. All stakeholders must be ready to abide by these conditions set in these deals, including enforcement.

6) Designs and Policies that Deliver on the Smart Growth promises. Our neighborhood did not deliver on the smart growth promises by picking policies out of a hat. Over time, we developed and fine-tuned a program where the policies support and reinforce each

other. Don't fudge on policies that are important parts of the package—such as affordable housing or parking limits—because they may be difficult to implement.

7) The Importance of Using Visual Images. The worst part of planning, in our opinion, is the 200-page document full of words. We have found that pictures are the best way to convey what we want. A cautionary note: Illustrations of what something COULD look like might contain elements that might not be part of a final agreement or construction budget. Be sure to distinguish between the elements that are “must haves” and those that are “frills”.

A Post-script: It's OK to Be Anxious

We would be remiss if we gave the impression that we accepted change without question, accepted each proposal with open arms, and never ran into anxiety about projects and plans. We have spent many hours over coffee and in living rooms venting because we needed to express our apprehensions and fear. Here are some words that might help:

1) Be prepared for proposals that fall short of the plan's aspirations. Developing plans for your community is a wondrous occasion. The sky is the limit and the pictures are pretty. But once the first blueprints for an actual project come in, your sense of the future may turn into dread, either because they represent real change that previously was only theoretical, or because they fall short of the vision.

Focus on the aspects of the project that you think aren't ready for prime time and work from there.

2) Don't expect to get everything exactly right.

We are constantly fine tuning. In the beginning, we made developers put in too much parking. Now, we are still trying to get visitor parking for apartments and townhouses right. We never have been able to attract great architecture, but we'll keep trying until we get it.

3) Be aware of setting precedents. As noted above, the comprehensive plans are meant to be somewhat flexible. Because of this, each project that comes in will likely require some sort of variation on height, parking, or design. When granting exceptions, be clear on what makes it a unique circumstance, or else the next developer will expect the same treatment.

4) Good planning means swimming against the tide. Finally, communities may find that fighting for the vision means fighting for the types of things Americans have been programmed to fight against: density, living near stores and services, streets with lots of connections. The problem is not density, but how and where it is done, and in what combination. While you may not face the intensity of development we have, we think our neighborhood's story of bringing in density to preserve the neighborhood can be useful. Next time you visit Washington, come visit Clarendon on the Orange Line and see.

Planning is serious business, but that doesn't mean it can't be fun...

When Loudon County, VA, residents were faced with a challenge to their efforts to manage the county's growth, they put their feelings into song. To hear, "Stand by Our Plan", sung to the tune of Tammi Wynette's "Stand by Your Man", visit: <http://www.loudounsfuture.org/audio/standbyourplan.mp3>

of a place, as opposed to conventional zoning, which merely carves the land into isolated uses with little or no attention to how the pieces should relate to each other. Instead of focusing on use restrictions, the form-based code focuses on design and character details such as building heights, street types, building fronts, the size of blocks, etc., without specifying individual uses for specific parcels of land.

Some communities not yet ready for a wholesale change to their zoning code may institute a "Traditional

Neighborhood Development" overlay zone. The overlay only applies to certain parcels but encourages the development of walkable town centers with a mix of residential, office, and retail.

🔗 **For an article about form-based codes, please see "Creating a livable place: Step one, throw away the municipal zoning code", on the web at: http://www.venturacountystar.com/vcs/opinion_columnists/article/0,1375,VCS_223_3571252,00.html**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For more detail on planning and links to other resources, visit the American Planning Association's web site at

For *very* detailed information on the legalities in zoning, making developer agreements that stick, and much more check out: *Bargaining for Development: A Handbook on Development Agreements, Annexation Agreements, Land Development Conditions, Vested Rights and the Provision of Public Facilities*, by David L. Callies, University of Hawaii School of Law; Daniel R. Curtin, Bingham McCutchen LLP; Julie A. Tappendorf, Holland & Knight LLP (2003). Available through the Environmental Law Institute on the web at: http://www.elistore.org/books_detail.asp?ID=10886

A Glossary Of Planning Terms

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU): Typically, this refers to a second dwelling attached to or separate from the main single family residence, such as a garage or basement apartment. This apartment or cottage may house one or more persons who may or may not be a member of the family. ADU's are often referred to by other names as well such as "mother-in-law suite" or "granny flat."

City Council: A city's legislative body. The popularly elected city council is responsible for enacting ordinances, imposing taxes, making appropriations, establishing policy, and hiring some city officials. The council adopts the local general plan, zoning, and subdivision ordinance.

Council of Governments (COGs)/Regional Planning Councils/Metropolitan Planning Organizations: These organizations are regional agencies concerned primarily with transportation planning and housing; they do not directly regulate land use but typically address issues that transcend local government boundaries.

Conditional Approval: Conditional Approvals are the conditions which need to be met in order for a project to be approved by the governing body. An example of a common condition is for a percentage of land to be dedicated as public open space.

Design Review Board: A group established by the local government to consider the design and aesthetics of development within design review zoning districts.

Development Fees: Fees charged to developers or builders as a prerequisite to permit approval. The most common are: (1) impact fees (such as parkland acquisition

fees, school facilities fees, or street construction fees) related to funding public improvements which are necessitated in part or in whole by the development; (2) connection fees (such as water line fees) to cover the cost of installing public services to the development; (3) permit fees (such as building permits, grading permits, sign permits) for the administrative costs of processing development plans; and, (4) application fees (rezoning, CUP, variance, etc.) for the administrative costs of reviewing and hearing development proposals.

Downzone: This term refers to the rezoning of land to a more restrictive or less intensive zone (for example, from multi-family residential to single-family residential or from residential to agricultural).

Floor Area Ratio (FAR): Floor Area Ratio, or FAR, is a measure of development intensity. FAR is the ratio of the amount of floor area of a building to the amount of area of its site. For instance, a one-story building that covers an entire lot has an FAR of 1. Similarly, a one-story building that covers 1/2 of a lot has an FAR of 0.5.

General Plan: A statement of policies, goals and objectives for the future physical development of the city or county.

Impact Fees: *See Development Fees.*

Overlay Zone: A set of zoning requirements that is superimposed upon a base zone. Overlay zones are generally used when a particular area requires special protection (as in a historic preservation district) or has a special problem (such as steep slopes, flooding or earthquake faults). Development of land subject to overlay zoning requires compliance with the regulations of both the base and overlay zones.

Planned Unit Development (PUD): Land use zoning which allows the adoption of a set of development standards that are specific to the particular project being proposed. Typically PUDs involve a mixture of different land uses and thus flexibility is needed from the rigid standards of the zoning code. PUD zones usually do not contain detailed development standards; these are established during the process of considering the proposals and adopted by ordinance if the project is approved.

Planning Commission: A group of residents appointed by the local government (or sometimes elected) to consider land use planning matters. The commission's duties and powers are established by the local legislative body and might include hearing proposals to amend the general plan or rezone land, initiating planning studies (road alignments, identification of hazards, etc.), and taking action on proposed subdivisions.

Setback: A minimum distance required by zoning to be maintained between two structures or between a structure and property lines.

Variance: A variance provides the property owner a means to deviate from the standard rules to mitigate any “unnecessary hardship” caused by complying with the zoning code. Variance requests are subject to public hearing, usually before a zoning administrator or board of zoning adjustment. Variances do not allow a change in land use, usually just the intensity of use.

Zoning: Local codes regulating the use and development of property. The zoning ordinance divides the city or county into land use zones, represented on zoning maps, and specifies the allowable uses within each of those zones. It establishes development standards for each zone, such as minimum lot size, maximum height of structures, building setbacks, and yard size.

Zoning Adjustment Board: A group appointed by the local legislative body to consider minor zoning adjustments such as conditional use permits and variances. It is empowered to conduct public hearings and to impose conditions of approval. Its decisions may be appealed to the local legislative body.

Chapter 3. Evaluating the Potential Impacts of Development

3

Given the poor planning associated with most recent development, many people have a rational suspicion of new projects.



As we saw in the chapter on sprawl and smart growth, we can't slow the destruction of farmland and natural areas or revitalize blighted or declining neighborhoods without making more efficient use of land and resources. That can mean turning a decommissioned parking lot into a nice neighborhood, for example, or building new villages at rail stations to make it possible for more riders to live near public transit. Inevitably, these kinds of solutions will mean increasing the density of some areas (though certainly not all—that's why we need advance planning!).

Some people thrive on the hum and activity of truly dense, urban environments, while others prefer the slow pace of country life. Most people seem to want something in between, with the convenience and options provided by town-like densities, but with a quiet retreat close at hand. Creating each of these environments involves careful planning and using smart design principles to achieve a balance. Over the last few decades, that thoughtfulness has been missing from much development, with the result that

many people have a rational suspicion of new projects.

It is understandable, then, that plans and projects labeled as smart growth would meet similar suspicion. If they are truly smart, however, the impacts often are less than feared. Those negatives that do emerge can be offset by the positive features the projects bring, or eliminated through—good design.

Below are some thoughts about how to assess the likely effects of development proposed for your neighborhood.

Evaluating density

“The only thing our residents dislike more than sprawl is density.” So goes a common lament among local planning officials, usually when they have been asked to approve new houses, apartments or other “infill” development in an existing neighborhood. Potential neighbors often fear the addition will be ugly, or will generate too much traffic or sacrifice too many trees. Certainly, poor or inappropriate

THREE KEY QUESTIONS to ask about density:

1 Is this the appropriate place for density?

Some clues: designation as such in the community plan, proximity to existing or planned public transit line, location in or near an existing town center.

2 Does the design of the project blend with the neighborhood context?

3 What amenities will density bring to the community? Some possibilities: better selection of shops and restaurants, a pocket park, reclamation of an ugly parking lot or dead mall, upgraded streetscape.

DEFINING DENSITY

Density is usually described in terms of the number of residential (or dwelling) units per acre.

Gross density: the total residential units per acre of land in the entire project.


Net density: the number of residential units per acre you have after excluding the land devoted to roads or other uses.

Floor Area Ratio: The total square footage of a building over the square footage of the parcel. **Example:** a two-story building covering half of a parcel will have an FAR of 1.

design can cause those problems and more. The devil is in the details—but so are the angels! Well-designed density can bring with it amenities that are impossible to provide in more sprawling areas, allowing for shops, restaurants, parks, ball fields and playgrounds within walking distance.

Think about some of the cherished older neighborhoods in your area. Though they are widely regarded as beautiful and comfortable, chances are they are significantly denser than modern suburbs. The single-family homes usually sit on smaller lots, while they share the neighborhood with small apartment buildings that often are hard to tell from the houses. There's usually a shopping district within easy walking distance; sometimes there are homes or offices above the shops. The density is masked with appealing architecture, street trees, parks, interesting landscaping and other amenities. You'll notice that the commercial streets with two- to four-story buildings often are the most appealing.

As you've probably assumed, higher densities can be more profitable for developers. That extra cash can also benefit the surrounding neighborhood, because it can give developers the resources not only to mitigate their own impacts, but also to fix longstanding trouble spots. Developers have upgraded nearby intersections to improve traffic flow, installed traffic calming devices, added more-affordable homes, planted trees along streets, installed sidewalks, and created pocket parks, to name a few. This is not possible in every instance, but in many communities, citizens have found that well designed and planned density can actually bring significant value to the neighborhood.

 **For more information on how good design can make denser neighborhoods livable and beautiful, please see:** "Creating Great Neighborhoods: Density in Your Community," an illustrated guide to well-designed neighborhoods of varying

densities, published by the U.S. EPA, National Association of Realtors and Local Government Commission: <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/density.htm>

Assessing traffic impacts

When a development proposal is on the table, increased traffic is almost always the first concern. And it is true that when people are given no alternative but to drive, new residents will increase traffic. A simple maxim helps to gauge the severity of the impact: The more automobile-dependent the new residents are, the more vehicle traffic they will generate. Spread-out development with homes far from shopping, retail separated from office, etc. leave no choice but to drive. Higher density with a mix of uses only creates traffic congestion in the absence of other choices, such as walking, biking, rail or bus. (In fact, without density, the provision of transit becomes difficult if not impossible and choosing to walk to accomplish daily tasks is unlikely.)

Because there is greater opportunity to walk in mixed-use neighborhoods with homes, shops, and restaurants in close proximity, several studies have shown, people who live in these neighborhoods tend to walk more¹. Smart growth neighborhoods strive to provide a balanced transportation system with multiple transportation options. One way to accomplish a balanced system is to provide a network of interconnected streets to provide motorists with multiple routes and pedestrians with more direct walking routes².

When raising concerns with public officials, it is important to be clear on the type of impact expected. Simply having more cars on existing roads is not necessarily a negative from a transportation planner's perspective, particularly if the roads had been underutilized. If the concern is over a particular bottleneck or



A note about cul de sacs. Dead-end streets, known as cul de sacs after the French phrase for “bottom of the bag”, have become a popular means of preventing cut-through traffic. Trouble, is they create other problems: Subdivisions with one way in and out force all traffic onto one arterial road, which then becomes clogged with traffic and unsafe for walking. Connected streets provide direct routes for walking and multiple options for driving and biking.

Parking and Traffic: How they connect

For most communities, traffic is one of the top concerns, if not the most important concern, when new development is proposed. Unfortunately, many communities inadvertently exacerbate traffic problems with their parking policies.

Many times, residents ask that projects include more parking in order to reduce the chance that motorists will use residential streets for parking. Retailers see parking as a critical component of success, or push for additional parking to satisfy their financial lenders. While this may seem to solve a host of problems, oversupplying parking has risks too. Excess surface parking lots can detract from the character of new development and can also have financial and environmental impacts. But to neighbors, parking translates into traffic. With easy and abundant (and probably free) parking, more visitors will choose to drive rather than visit by other means. This needn't be the case when there are viable options to arrive by foot, train, bus, bike or transit service.

When approaching a new development project, there are some basic questions to ask:

1 Is the project completely automobile-dependent? If so, must it be? Most developers, planners and architects use formulas published by national organizations to determine how many parking spaces are required of various types of development projects. However, most of the formulas are based on conventional, auto-dependent development, where the only option is to arrive by car, and so tend to overestimate the number of spaces needed in mixed-use, walkable areas. In recent years, however, many communities have begun developing new parking standards, as have professional organizations, for projects that are supported by several modes of transportation and offer the opportunity to accomplish many tasks while parking only once. You might want to check to see whether your community has developed standards for mixed use, walkable and/or transit oriented projects.

2 Are there local programs in place that impact the demand for parking? Many communities are working with employers to reduce the number of employees who drive alone to work. Incentives for carpooling, transit

design flaw, comments should be focused on the need to fix that problem. If you're worried about vehicles speeding on neighborhood streets, the focus should be on narrowing those streets to encourage slower speeds and using other techniques to "calm" the traffic. These same measures can be used to slow or discourage "cut-through" traffic, rather than creating the traffic issues associated with cul de sacs. Smart-growth development will not eliminate traffic but it can make congestion more manageable.

🔗 **For more on traffic issues, see the sidebars, "A Traffic Tale", p. 36-37, and "Parking and Traffic," p. 38-39.**

🔗 **For more about mitigating traffic impacts see:**

- <http://www.walkinginfo.org/index.htm>
- <http://www.bikewalk.org/>
- <http://activelivingbydesign.org/>

The impacts of "big box" retail centers

Few development issues stir as many passions as the siting of new mega-stores such as Wal-Mart or Home Depot, commonly referred to as "big boxes". Although they are popular places to shop, their impacts on a community can be huge. As the National Trust for Historic Preservation puts it, "Big-box stores impose hidden costs that don't appear on the price tags of the products they sell: traffic congestion; loss of trees, open space and farmland; displaced small businesses; substitution of jobs that support families with low-paying jobs that don't; air and water pollution; dying downtowns with vacant buildings; abandoned shopping centers; [and] a degraded sense of community."

Many communities accept these impacts based on assumptions that don't always hold true. First, local officials



often are seduced by the prospect of a tax revenue windfall that doesn't materialize. A study conducted for the city of Barnstable, MA, for example, found that big box retail, shopping centers and fast food restaurants actually *cost more* in road maintenance, security and other services than they bring in. (For more, see <http://www.tischlerassociates.com/cost.html>)

Second, communities often settle for only cosmetic improvements to big-box design—"lipstick on the pig" as some call it—because developers insist retailers can't adapt their formats to fit with local architecture or reuse older buildings. But a growing number of communities have found that that's not necessarily the case. When Gaithersburg, MD, set a maximum footprint of 80,000 square feet, big box retailers set up shop in two-story buildings more in keeping with a typical Main Street. Other places have required parking in the back, on the side or in a parking deck.

use and bicycling all can have an impact to reduce the number of drivers, and hence the number of spaces needed. In addition, some larger cities are requiring that the price of a parking space be "unbundled" from the monthly rent bill. This way, the price of parking becomes more transparent. In addition, it allows a renter to opt out of the payment since they are not using the parking space.

- 3 Does the project fit our land use plan to make walking, biking and transit as attractive as driving, if not more so?** The reduction in parking needed can take place only if the development project is supported by pedestrians and transit users. This means that design features need to be in place, such as safe crosswalks, adequate sidewalks and convenient access. Building design also comes into play: long blank walls, large parking lots, and roadways built only for cars can reduce how attractive a place is for pedestrians.
- 4 How can we better manage parking on city streets so as to reduce the need for new pavement?** For many communities, there is unrealized opportunity to provide parking on city streets. This parking can be better managed to provide overflow parking, or serve to satisfy the parking requirements for redevelopment projects. Options you may want to explore include metered parking, installing new parking lanes on overly wide streets, diagonal parking and using city owned spaces for shared use.
- 5 Are there opportunities for shared parking?** Centralized parking provides a facility to be used among several users. For example, office workers may use the spaces during the day, while restaurants use the same spaces at night.

This section is only a summary of the options that communities may want to consider. For more information, watch for the spring, 2005 release of *Parking Spaces/Community Places*, a community guide developed by the U.S. EPA. The book will present a wider discussion on parking policies, information on how to implement them, and provide success stories from communities that have balanced parking with other community goals.

A TRAFFIC TALE:

How one Virginia community avoided traffic problems as it grew denser

Many people recognize that having more residents living and shopping in an area can expand the dining and retail options for everyone. That can be a positive, provided that the density is in an appropriate location. Even then, however, people worry about being overrun with more traffic – a reasonable fear, given the way we have developed over the last few decades.

But when Arlington, VA deliberately changed those old habits through its Smart Growth program, the town found that a doubling in density did not double traffic. In fact, traffic volumes were far less than expected.

In the 1980's, Arlington found itself facing two large transportation projects: installation of the last leg of I-66 to Washington, D.C. and the extension of the Metro rail system. At that time, Arlington also was facing tough economic times, as many residents were moving out to Fairfax County. Forward-looking leaders decided to use the coming transportation projects to fuel an economic development strategy that focused growth around the rail stations, an idea some now call transit-oriented development.

The County went to local businesses, land owners and residents to make a deal. In exchange for residents' support for a plan to build more than 35 million square feet of development in the three-mile rail corridor, the county would put limits on building heights, taper the heights down to the existing residential neighborhoods and establish lines across which density could not cross. The residents agreed to this deal and accepted the invitation to sit down and help plan for the coming density.

In addition to a broad planning effort, the county established sector plans for the neighborhoods around each of the five stations. The plan for the middle Arlington station, Clarendon, was completed in 1984. At that point the county commissioned a traffic impact study to establish traffic counts at the time, as well as projected counts for 2000, the year by which much of the development was expected to be completed.

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Ask for Complete Streets. While streets need to move cars, they also should give people the choice of walking, biking and using public transit. Most streets today are built only with cars in mind, so they're not always safe, comfortable and pleasant for people outside their vehicles. Across the country communities increasingly are demanding "Complete Streets". With only a few, inexpensive tweaks to road projects, we can save lives and make our towns and cities far more livable. For more information, please see: CompleteStreets.org.



And, finally, communities often fail to protect themselves against the inevitable abandonment of big box stores, assuming there's little they can do. But places like Buckingham Township, Pennsylvania, have required developers to post bonds to cover the demolition cost should the building sit empty; that in turn can help make the site attractive for redevelopment in a more sustainable form. That's only one of a growing array of techniques for hedging against big-box blight.

🔗 For more, see “Big-Box Sprawl (And How to Control It)” from the National Trust for Historic Preservation: http://www.nationaltrust.org/issues/smartgrowth/big_box_sprawl.pdf

Will rental housing harm the neighborhood?

Some people assume that rental housing will harm property values. Often, they fear that rental homes won't. The key here, as with all well-planned development, is to achieve an appropriate mix of housing of types to give people what they need and want. As we saw earlier, there are problems associated with having too much of any one thing in large numbers, including for-sale, single family houses.

Smart projects shouldn't just bring a lot more of what already exists. They should help to establish a local balance of rental to owner-occupied that matches the regional demand, typically one-third rental and two-thirds owner. They also should expand the local choice in housing type, so that people in various stages of life can find a house, townhouse, two- or three-family house, garage apartment, condominium or apartment as their needs dictate.

By no means are all renters poor. Currently 40 percent of Americans who live in apartments do so by choice,

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In Arlington, roughly one household in four does not even own a car. But this does not mean these residents have no options. Over half of the residents in the corridor take a train, bus, bike or walk to work.

For the major intersection in Clarendon, Washington Boulevard and Wilson Boulevard, the traffic counts in 1980 were 17,800 cars per day. The traffic study's forecast for 2000 called for 21,400 cars.

So what happened actually happened by 2000? Between 1980 and 2000, close to 1 million square feet of shopping, offices and housing was added around the Clarendon station, but the traffic counts at Washington and Wilson Boulevards was 19,478, less than half the expected increase. At several intersections along Wilson Boulevard, traffic counts over the two decades actually declined.

How could traffic projections have fallen so short? Some of the answer lies in car ownership and transportation data for the corridor. The average number of cars per household in the corridor is 1.3 cars per household for owner occupied units, and 1.1 for rental units. As a comparison, the national average is 1.85 cars per household.

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Peter Owen, who chairs a citizen committee on transportation, attributes the performance to several inter-related decisions about land use and transportation. First, the county paid close attention to the mix of uses – homes, shops, services and work places—and concentrations needed to both make public transit a convenient option and reduce the need for car trips. Over the years the county has revisited its policies on parking requirements, built pedestrian-friendly walkways and developed programs to assist employers whose workers use transit. To encourage bicycle commuting, for example, the county requires new office buildings to supply showers and lockers.

SOURCES:

Clarendon Sector Plan, Arlington County Virginia, 1984
Development in the Metro Corridors 2003, Arlington County, Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development
Traffic Count Data, 2001-2002, Arlington County, Department of Environmental Services

“I remember being so moved by a woman in Norwell, Massachusetts. She and her neighbors were considering whether to oppose a project of subsidized homes for seniors in their area. In the end, she stood up at a meeting and said that, as a devout Christian, she realized people needed these homes, and she didn’t feel right fighting against them. Unfortunately, that’s rare these days.”

– Russ Tanner, affordable housing development consultant

Food for Thought ...

Let’s be honest. Some people will fight against apartments or affordable homes because they are worried about the people who will live in them. In many cases, they are uncomfortable with the idea of living near people who are not like themselves.

The truth is, people who rent or buy lower-cost houses aren’t so very different from people with a little more money. After all, nearly all of us have been or will be renters for some period in our lives. We all started out somewhere, with first jobs that didn’t pay so well, or as young families just getting our feet on the ground; and God willing, we will live to be old enough to need seniors’ housing.

Sometimes people insist that houses anywhere near them must be exactly like their own, believing that will make for more compatible neighbors. Because people in this country are free to live wherever they like, though, we can’t control who our neighbors are, no matter what kind of housing is nearby. There is no reason to expect that a well-to-do stockbroker, say, will make a more congenial neighbor than a young 6th-grade teacher or retired widow. And all either have been or will be important contributors to the local economy.

It would be unfair to label everyone who raises fears about apartments or affordable homes as “racist” or “classist”. Still, there’s no getting around the fact that those prejudices are out there. If you suspect that some of your neighbors are primarily motivated by fear or hostility toward minorities or people of lower incomes, it is advisable to distance yourself from them, and certainly avoid selecting them as spokespersons for your neighborhood’s position. Public officials will be likely to discount views that appear discriminatory, in part because such notions run counter to the American ideal of equality, but also because housing discrimination is illegal.

and it has become increasingly more popular among higher-income households.³ Rental properties with good access to jobs, retail, parks and open space, are highly valued and command a premium⁴. Research by the Urban Land Institute and the National Multi-Housing Council demonstrate that homes near apartments do not lose their value: Between 1987 and 1995, the average annual rate of appreciation for a house within 300 feet of an apartment building was just over 3 percent, the same as houses nowhere near apartments.⁵ In some communities oriented towards people earning modest incomes such as teachers, nurses, office staff, policemen, firefighters, etc., the presence of multifamily dwellings actually created higher house values.⁶

Apartment dwellers have a lower impact on traffic congestion, according to the Institute of Transportation Engineers, which has found that apartment living generates 30 to 40 percent fewer vehicle trips than single-family units. In addition, apartment residents require half as many



motor vehicles per household than owner-occupied houses⁷ that can minimize parking requirements.

Apartments use municipal infrastructure more efficiently, as they require fewer roads, sewers, and water lines, and receive them at lower cost. Compared with the single-family owner, apartments have three times fewer school-age children to send to local school systems.⁸

Numerous studies indicate that a single housing development—whether it be rental or owner-occupied, or homes for special populations such as the disabled, elderly or homeless women and children—*will not* determine property values. More complex factors such as the features of the particular property in question, urban and suburban expansion, road construction, and the overall area and prosperity have a cumulative effect.⁹

A Word about Affordable Housing

We have a growing shortage of affordable housing in many parts of the U.S. While it's hitting low-income families hardest, increasing numbers of hard-working families are pressed to find housing they can afford anywhere near their jobs.¹⁰ Teachers, firefighters and other government workers can't find housing in the jurisdictions they serve. Employers in many areas are concerned about recruiting and retaining a workforce for whom affordable housing is farther and farther away. As they get pushed farther out, long commutes are taking a huge toll in time and money, and traffic gets that much worse for all of us.

One problem is that it is increasingly difficult—even illegal—to build moderately priced homes in many of the closer-in suburbs. Most have zoning laws that mandate large houses and/or large, expensive lots, or that prohibit rental properties. By the same token, some jurisdictions



The growing **shortage of affordable housing** is forcing teachers, police, firefighters and others of similar means to live far away from work.

have more than their fair share of the subsidized and other low-cost housing. Good planning ought to allow for housing for the full population in a way that is fair to homeowners, home-seekers of all incomes and to local jurisdictions. Some communities have addressed these issues through a metro-wide, fair-share housing agreement, under which each jurisdiction plans and zones to meet agreed-upon housing supply across incomes. How fair is the housing picture in your community?



Security

Many people assume that having more people living nearby will lead to increased crime. Interestingly, though, a well-designed and populated city street is one of the safest places you can be. One reason is the presence of many “eyes on the street”, as described by author Jane Jacobs in her classic, “The Death and Life of American Cities”. As police officers confirm, the more people who might see a criminal act, the safer you’re likely to be.



It’s easier (and less costly) to police more-compact areas than those that are spread out. Apartments frequently come with their own security officers as owners concentrate on crime prevention to preserve their neighborhood’s reputation. In fact, single women and older residents are attracted to the rapidly growing luxury apartment sector in part because of the extra safety precautions they offer.



By contrast, many features of the conventional car-oriented landscape are especially dangerous. Large mall and big-box parking lots are common lures for muggers, particularly during the holiday season. Subdivisions that are empty during the day are prime targets for burglaries. In more mixed neighborhoods, “You can have active older adults who are more likely to be home during the day to enhance security,” as interior designer Stella Koop told *Builder Magazine* in January, 2004.



Safety

Related to public health are safety concerns, specifically motor vehicle accidents. Each year automobiles cause about 6,000 fatalities and 110,000 injuries of pedestrians nationwide, says a 1997 study by the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STTP) and Environmental Working Group. According to the report, “Pedestrians are

Pedestrians account for 14% of all motor vehicle-related deaths, yet only 1% of highway safety funds are spent on pedestrian safety.

nearly twice as likely to be killed by a stranger with a car as a stranger with a gun.”¹¹

Official proposals to widen and straighten roads are often based on claims that these “improvements” will improve the safety of travel. Research based on data from 1984 to 1997 however found that motorists are encouraged to drive at higher speeds on wider and straighter roads. In fact, during the study period, 2,000 fatalities were generated, many among pedestrians.¹²

People are more likely to die in automobile related accidents in sprawling areas than in denser cities, which have more extensive transportation systems. In Riverside, California, for example, the most sprawling region in the nation, 18 of every 100,000 residents die in traffic crashes each year, while the eight least sprawling metro areas have fewer than 8 deaths per 100,000 residents.¹³ As STTP notes, “Pedestrians account for 14% of all motor vehicle-related deaths, yet only 1% of highway safety funds are spent on pedestrian safety.” The money that is spent to make roads safer actually makes roads more dangerous for walkers.

Property values and market demand

When a new development proposal comes to the neighborhood, it’s natural to worry about the effect on our property values. In reality, though, the vast majority



Homebuyers and businesses are looking for something more than isolated subdivisions and office parks and are choosing places that have a **town center**, connect to **green space** with pedestrian pathways, and allow people to work from home or have an **easy commute** to the office.

of developments that qualify as “smart growth” either will have no depressing effect on property values, or will actually cause them to rise. Think about it this way: Projects qualify as smart growth when they revitalize or redevelop existing areas, add housing closer to jobs and public transportation, make areas more walkable by creating walk-to destinations, etc. They should have good access not only to jobs, but to shops, parks and recreational areas. These features make our towns and neighborhoods

more desirable, and that typically puts upward pressure on property values (which is one reason why these projects should include some units that are affordable to low and moderate incomes).

Some people express concerns that smart-growth projects will fail because there is no market for that kind of development. That contention is being heard less and less these days, however, as well-planned projects that fit with community goals continue to be built and succeed.

Market research has shown that in most any metro area, roughly one-third of home seekers have a preference for a urban environments with convenience of walk-to destinations.¹⁴ Experience has shown that many more people actually like such neighborhoods when they get a chance to visit them, rather than simply think about them in the abstract. The market for convenient, low-maintenance living is especially strong among students and young professionals, small and single-parent families, childless couples, and empty-nesters. As the population ages and couples delay marriage and child-bearing, the proportion of households without kids is growing rapidly. At the same time, the share of home-seekers that fits the standard suburban market—families with children at home—is declining. And a growing number even of those families are discovering the benefits of having the important pieces of their lives—home, work, the kids’ school and activities, shopping—in close proximity.

We’re seeing a rebirth of city and small-town life. Survey research shows that in major cities the number of downtown residents will grow substantially in the next decade. Homebuyers and businesses are looking for something more than isolated subdivisions and office parks and are choosing places that have a town center, that connect to green space with pedestrian pathways, that allow people to work from home or have an easy



commute to the office. The publication *Emerging Trends in Real Estate* projects that in the next 25 years real estate values will rise more rapidly in cities that apply these smart growth principles.¹⁵ With high consumer demand and the involvement of builders and planners, the possibilities for further innovation in smart growth developments are numerous.

Endnotes

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⁴ Srour, Issam M., Kara M. Kockelman, and Travis P. Dunn, *Accessibility Indices: A Connection to Residential Land Prices and Location Choices*, Paper Presented at the 81st Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board and Recommended for publication in the Transportation Research Record

⁵ *The Case for Multifamily Housing*, The Urban Land Institute, 1991 http://research.uli.org/Content/Reports/PolicyPapers/PUB_C62.pdf 17.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Data from the Institute of Transportation Engineers and NMHC tabulations of 1999 American Housing Survey, *Creating Successful Communities: A New Housing Paradigm*, 6.

⁸ *Creating Successful Communities: A New Housing Paradigm*, National Multi Housing Coalition, 2002.

⁹ *The NIMBY Report* 31.

¹⁰ USA Today, ...

¹¹ Cohen BA, Wiles R, Campbell C, Chen D, Kruse J, Corless J, "Mean streets: pedestrian safety and reform of the nation's transportation law," Surface Transportation Policy Project and Environmental Working Group, 1997 <http://www.ewg.org/pub/home/reports/meanstreets/mean.html>.

¹² Robert Noland, *Traffic Fatalities and Injuries: Are Reductions the Result of 'Improvements' in Highway Design Standards?* National Research Council, Transportation Research Board, Annual Meeting, Jan 2001 <http://www.penbiped.org/highway-safety-not.pdf> 12.

¹³ Ewing R, Pendall R, and Chen D, *Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact*, Oct 2002 <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.com/sprawlindex/MeasuringSprawl.PDF>.

¹⁴ *The Coming Demand*, (and numerous other sources)

¹⁵ *Emerging Trends in Real Estate 1999*, Center for Policy Research, New York: Pricewaterhouse-Coopers and Lend Lease Real Estate Investments, 1999.

Chapter 4. Gauging the Environmental Impact of Development

4

Ultimately, the best way to **preserve natural habitat** is through the **excellent design** of human habitat.



Just about every human activity has an environmental impact. When it comes to the growth of our cities and metro areas, the question is how best to minimize that impact. Ultimately, the best way to preserve natural habitat is through the excellent design of human habitat.

Well-planned growth can help preserve and even improve environmental quality. This section is designed to help you make sure that a new development in your area will have minimal impact on your air quality, water quality, and other environmental issues.

The environmental premise behind smart planning is that, knowing that development will have to occur—human beings need to live *somewhere*, after all—the best approach is to keep it compact and minimize its impact, while making the places we build for people as nice and long-lasting as possible. In the following section we'll discuss the impact of development on air, water, land and wildlife protection, and how to be sure that environmental issues are being considered in the development coming into your neighborhood.

Growth and Air Quality

As you're probably aware, motorized vehicles are a prime source of air pollution. In fact, as environmental rules have made industries cleaner, the share of pollution attributable to cars has grown. In many areas today, half or more of smog-causing pollutants come from vehicles. The way we plan and develop our cities has a huge impact on how much we have to drive to meet our daily needs, and therefore how much pollution is emitted. Several recent studies have shown that families living in compact neighborhoods where they can walk to shops or public transportation drive much less than those who live areas designed only for vehicle use. Likewise, more sprawling metro areas have significantly higher levels of ozone pollution.'

One of the keys to improving and maintaining air quality is to make it possible for people to live their daily lives without having to drive so much. Some ways to do this include putting destinations close enough together to make

AIR QUALITY

Did you know ...

A study of school children in the Los Angeles region found that greater exposure to auto emissions increased the likelihood of having asthma. This is the first evidence that ozone pollution from cars may actually cause asthma, not just exacerbate it.

On average, every mile driven emits about one pound of CO₂, a primary greenhouse gas. Motor vehicles are also the fastest-growing source of other greenhouse gas emissions.¹

Households located in the most compact and well-connected parts of Seattle drive less than half as much per day as households in the most sprawling parts of the region. (Frank research/CCAP)

Much of the dramatic (22 percent) increase in driving in the last decade can be attributed to sprawling development that requires a car to make every trip.

Breathing polluted air is linked to asthma, cancer, heart disease, and premature death. (STPP http://www.transact.org/library/reports_pdfs/Clean_Air/report.pdf)

¹CCAP state and local action paper http://www.ccap.org/pdf/statetransport_climat.pdf

more trips practical via foot or bicycle, or providing trains, buses, sidewalks, and bikeways.

Automobiles are also a major source of “greenhouse gases”—the gases that trap heat in the atmosphere and are causing global warming. Cars and trucks emit one-third of the most common greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide (CO₂). Since more compact development can make a big difference in traffic levels, this can ultimately reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For example, a development in Dallas that is bringing 400 homes and 1500 jobs close to the region’s new light rail line is expected to generate 38% less driving, with a corresponding reduction in CO₂.

Another quality of the air is its temperature: more and more metropolitan areas are coping with a phenomenon called an “urban heat island.” Having a broad expanse of

developed area creates a micro-climate, a warm umbrella of air that raises air conditioning demand, increases smog, and increases heat-related illnesses. Because it can reduce a region’s overall footprint, compact design contributes less heat energy than dispersed development. As with all development, though, proper attention should be given to measures to reduce heat, such as reducing surface parking lots, planting trees or using heat-reducing roofing materials.²

The Regulation of Air Quality

Air quality is measured and regulated at the regional and state level, through the federal Clean Air Act. The act focuses on pollution sources such as power-plants, dry cleaners, and automobile emissions; housing or other development projects are not generally scrutinized for air-quality impacts. Some states and regions require assessment of the impact of developments if they are really large and will clearly have an impact beyond their immediate jurisdiction.

With the exception of such large projects, the relationship between air quality standards and your local development may not be very direct. But it is good to understand the basic way the laws work.

Metro areas that have unhealthy air and are in “non-attainment” of federal safety standards are required to make sure their transportation plans won’t make the problem substantially worse.

🔗 To find out the air quality status of your area, see <http://www.epa.gov/oar/oaqps/greenbk/mapnpoll.html>

Metro transportation plans are made by groups of government agencies working together as a Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO. The MPO’s plan must

The Types of Air Pollution:

Ozone. This lung irritant forms when sunlight interacts with nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and Volatile Organic compounds (VOCs), both emitted by automobiles.

Carbon Monoxide. A colorless, odorless, poisonous gas that results from incomplete burning of carbon in fuels.

Sulfur Dioxide. The primary component in acid rain.

Particulate matter. Dust, dirt, soot or smoke.

Greenhouse gases. Gases that help trap heat in the atmosphere, contributing to global warming. The primary greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide; others are methane (CH₄), chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and nitrous oxides.



stay under an emissions cap set by the state, which is responsible for making a cleanup plan and sticking to it. The state plan is referred to as the State Implementation Plan, or SIP.

Through computer modeling, the MPO has to show what will happen to air quality if their plan is built in both the near term and 20 years later. Transportation projects must be factored into these regional and state pollution-control plans, and federal transportation dollars can be held up if the local entities cannot show future air quality improvements. This ‘conformity’ process generally includes a public outreach component.

Checking the Air Quality Impact of a new development

In evaluating the air-quality impact of the development coming into your neighborhood, the first question to ask is whether the people living in it will have to drive

A CAUTIONARY NOTE ON TRAFFIC COUNTS:

When planners talk about how much traffic—and how much air pollution—a development may generate, they use models that make assumptions about how people travel. Usually those assumptions are based on conventional, car-dependent development. Although research has confirmed that more compact development allows for less driving, this fact is not yet reflected in many of the models used by planners. If you are involved in a project that is using projections of traffic counts, be sure to find out about the assumptions behind the models. Independent consultants can help you evaluate these highly technical documents.

everywhere they go. Does the development include shops, schools, or offices that can be reached by foot or bicycle? Does it connect to existing destinations that surround it, or is it an isolated tract with only one or two entrances? Will it be surrounded by surface parking, which tends to raise temperatures and harm air quality? The developers or local planners may have estimated “vehicle miles traveled” (VMT) for the development. You may want to ask about those statistics.

Potentially adverse air quality impacts can be mitigated by increasing access to walking, bicycling, and transit. Sidewalks and bike lanes are easiest to install in the initial stages of development. In the Atlantic Station project, the developers have established a free shuttle bus to take Atlantic Station residents and workers to the nearby MARTA rail station.



OUR WATER ? Did you know ...

One in three new houses is built on a septic tank or other on-site sewage system. In Atlanta, water experts found that septic tanks harmed water supply by dramatically slowing or eliminating the return of water to area streams.

Stormwater runoff was ranked as the sixth leading source of impairment in rivers, fourth in lakes, and second in estuaries.¹

Research now shows that the run-off from the typical, highly compacted lawn is almost as high as paved surfaces.²

¹ U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water. "Water Quality Conditions in the United States: A Profile from the 1998 National Water Quality Inventory Report to Congress" www.epa.gov/OWOW/305b. Washington, D.C. June 2000. (EPA841-F-00-006).

² Schueler, Tom. "The Compaction of Urban Soil." *Techniques for Watershed Protection*. Center for Watershed Protection, Ellicott City, Maryland: 2000.

Water and Development

While the United States has made great progress in cleaning up lakes and rivers polluted by industrial waste, 45 percent of water bodies in the United States remain polluted. Much of this pollution is from a source that is impossible to pinpoint: runoff from roads, parking lots, and other impervious surfaces. The runoff carries various pollutants that are the most common source of water pollution for lakes and estuaries and the third most common for rivers. This so called 'non-point source pollution' is the type that is most likely to damage stream or lake quality in your neighborhood.

Typical developments of the last few decades tend to generate massive amounts of run-off, because they contain large swaths of hard, impervious surfaces in the form of roofs on sprawling one-story buildings, vast parking lots, and extensive road networks. Water from these surfaces is typically collected and directed into storm drains, which often dump directly into streams and rivers.

This direct channeling of water from hard surfaces to pipes and into streams bypasses the cleansing effect of percolation through the soil or slow movement through wetlands. Impervious surfaces increase the risk of flooding by forcing water directly into swollen streams rather than letting it soak into the ground. This reduces the recharge of ground water used for drinking; a national study found that between 1982 and 1997 drinking water supplies were significantly depleted because of impervious surfaces. Dallas lost an estimated 10 billion gallons; fast-growing Atlanta lost 132 billion gallons.³

As with air quality, keeping development compact helps preserve water quality in a number of ways. Compact development can help preserve continuous areas of open space important for water quality, and it reduces the amount of impervious surface that covers the lands

Key Laws & Terms Summarized

Stormwater regulations regulate pollution from runoff, and were recently expanded to cover discharge from streets, rooftops and construction sites. Construction projects must often get a stormwater permit.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is a determination made by states of how much of specific pollutants an already compromised body of water can take and maintain water quality standards. The TMDL standards set for each polluted water body allocate the amount of specific pollutants allowed from each sector, such as industrial, agricultural, or development. Sediment and runoff from construction sites are regulated by TMDL, so this may be relevant when a local project is being built.

Wetland: A specific ecosystem that has vegetation adapted to wet conditions, wet soil types, and wetland hydrology. The Army Corps of Engineers, which issues dredge and fill permits for wetlands, requires all three factors to be present when it defines a wetland. The Environmental Protection Agency considers a site with any one of the three features to be a wetland. Wetlands are especially important because they serve as a natural filtration system for pollutants.

Source Water Protection Areas. The Clean Drinking Water Act directs communities to identify watersheds and water bodies that are critical drinking water sources, and helps identify threats and maintain clean drinking water standards. For more information, <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/protect/sources.html>.



Studies have shown that an entire **watershed becomes degraded** if more than ten percent of the land is covered with impervious surfaces.

that drain into a particular stream. Multi-story buildings with smaller parking lots cover less land than spread-out single-story developments with big parking lots. Compact development also makes it easier to protect critical water resources from development, such as wetlands, vegetated buffers along streambeds, river corridors, and floodplains.

Regulating Water Quality

Water quality issues are regulated at the federal level mainly by the Clean Water Act. The most relevant sections of the Clean Water Act for growth and development are the regulations on stormwater runoff and the anti-degradation provisions, which prohibit the degradation of water quality in pristine water bodies. Unlike the Clean Air Act, however, enforcement of the Clean Water Act is voluntary.

States get Clean Water State Revolving Funds which are primarily used to help clean up dirty polluted water bodies. The Environmental Protection Agency recognizes smart growth techniques as important ways to meet stormwater regulations, but sometimes those same regulations can actually hamper compact development. [\[need to refer to a source for further info\]](#)

Misconceptions about Preserving Water Quality

One might be tempted to think that spread-out development with large lots is better for water quality. This usually isn't the case, however. Spread-out lots require more paved road surface (and more driving) and the roads and other infrastructure tend to fragment stream habitats. Spread out developments result in more impervious surface per household. According to an analysis by the EPA, a subdivision with 8 houses on one-acre lots will produce 18,7000 cubic feet of runoff per year, while a development with eight houses on quarter-acre lots will generate just 6,200 cubic feet of runoff annually.⁴ Perhaps most importantly, low-density development means the inevitable population growth of the region must go somewhere else.

Studies have shown that an entire watershed becomes degraded if more than ten percent of the land is covered with impervious surfaces. Local officials, and sometimes regulations, may assume this means that each development must minimize impervious surfaces. Regulations that require each developer to control stormwater on site (often by building detention ponds) can render compact development impossible, and can discourage the redevelopment of sites such as parking lots that are already paved. These assumptions ignore the much greater water quality benefit of preserving intact open space at the edge of the community.

How redevelopment can help water quality

Mizner Park in Boca Raton Florida demonstrates that redevelopment can actually improve water quality. Once a traditional shopping mall surrounded by a sea of parking, Mizner was redesigned into a community that includes 272 apartments and townhouses, 103,000 square feet of office space, and 156,000 square feet of retail space. Before redevelopment, the site was 100 percent impervious cover. The redevelopment included installing a wide plaza that runs the length of the development that includes grass, trees, and other native landscaping, as well as numerous small landscaped areas. Impervious cover was reduced after development, reducing stormwater runoff accordingly.¹

¹ Lynn Richards, draft regulatory implications white paper

OUR LAND Did you know ...

From 1960 to 1990, the amount of developed land in metro areas more than doubled, while population grew by less than half.¹

Every minute of every day, America loses two acres of farmland. From 1992-1997 the US developed more than 6 million acres of agricultural land—an area the size of Maryland. (AFT/Edge)

86 percent of U.S. fruits and vegetables, and 63 percent of our dairy products, are produced in urban-influenced areas.

Development has already paved over nearly a third of the country's most productive farm land.²

The conversion of farms has accelerated in the 1990s, with 51% more conversions in the 1990s than in the 1980s.

The Missouri State Department of Natural Resources found that the biological integrity of 27 state parks is threatened by increasingly dispersed patterns of development.³



Evaluating the water quality impact of a new development

The first step in evaluating the water quality impact of an incoming development is to understand something about your watershed. Ask officials in your local planning department about any work to identify critical water bodies for preservation or to preserve drinking water quality. See if the community has any plans to maintain a “finger network” of connected water bodies to provide continuous habitat. Check to see if local streams have been designated as polluted and have “TMDL” plans that require that pollutants be monitored and restricted (see box on page 46).


If you have a stream, pond or wetland in your neighborhood, determine what role it plays in the region's hydrology to determine how much protection it may need. Wetlands or river banks with an intact vegetated buffer can

be more important to the watershed than other bodies of water and should take priority for preservation.

As the development is being built, sediment from construction can be a major water quality problem. If local streams have been identified as polluted, the developer is probably obliged to comply with “best management practices” to minimize erosion and runoff. If you see high levels of sediment running into the gutter or into streams, report it to county officials.

As you evaluate a development coming into your area for its impact on water quality, you can ask developers to incorporate a number of elements in addition to compact design that will ensure better water quality:

- Increasing tree cover helps reduce runoff. A study of Fayetteville, Arkansas, found that the city had lost 18 percent of its tree cover, and that restoring it could save the city \$135 billion in storm water benefits.
- Shared parking. Parking lots can be made smaller and serve double-duty if they serve office workers in the day and restaurant or theatre-goers in the evening.
- Street designs that minimize street widths, which can help reduce runoff.

 **For a closer look at some of these ideas, see:**
<http://www.nrdc.org/water/pollution/nstorm.asp>

In addition to techniques that fundamentally preserve the watershed, developers can use techniques that treat stormwater on site by mimicking natural hydrology as much as possible. An added bonus of many of these techniques is that they will increase the greenery on the site, creating a more interesting and inviting environment.

- Bio-retention. Instead of building concrete holding ponds, developers create rain gardens, green roofs, or other

natural vegetated areas to keep stormwater on site, slow it down, and give it a chance to soak into the soil.

- Simple storm barrels can capture rainwater for garden use. The city of Seattle has distributed thousands of these barrels to homeowners.
- Redevelopment can offer an opportunity to replace parking lots and other hard surfaces with a mix of buildings and green space.⁵

 For more on these approaches see: <http://www.cityofchicago.org/Environment/GreenTech/>

Preservation of Open Space and Protection of Endangered Species

Open space takes many forms: It may be an untouched wooded area, a family farm, a regional park, or even a pocket park just big enough to eat lunch outdoors. Sprawling development can affect all of these types of open space.

Losing a beautiful tract of land is certainly the most notorious consequence of sprawl. Often this is seen as an inevitable consequence of growth, but sprawling development consumes land at an astonishing rate. From 1982-1997, U.S. population grew by 17 percent, while urbanized land grew by 47 percent, according to research by the American Farmland Trust. In stagnating metro areas, the comparison is particularly stark: In Pittsburgh between 1950 and 1990, the population grew by 9.5 percent, but the urbanized area exploded by more than 200 percent.⁶

This rate of growth means an estimated 2.2 million acres of farmland, forests, wetlands, and other open space are converted into developed land each year. About half of that land is agricultural; the American Farmland

Trust says 86 percent of U.S. fruits and vegetables, and 63 percent of our dairy products, are produced in urban-influenced areas. In addition to losing prime farmland, many areas are also facing the destruction of natural areas and the fragmentation of habitat for many species. Habitat destruction is the main factor threatening 80 percent or more of the wild creatures listed under the Endangered Species Act.⁷

This rapid rate of destruction has occurred even as population growth in many of the nation's established urban areas has stalled. Redirecting development back to these areas through 'infill' development of vacant lots and revitalization of abandoned or declining developments can help reduce the amount of open space necessary to accommodate growth. The redevelopment of brownfields, areas contaminated by pollutants, is particularly powerful because it can actually improve environmental quality in an urban area while preserving open space. Using more



From 1960 to 1990, the amount of developed land in metro areas more than doubled, while the population grew by less than 50%.⁴ Many regions that barely added population spread out nonetheless.⁵

For every one acre of redeveloped brownfields, we save 4.5 acres of open space.

¹ (greenfields pg. 6).

² Farming on the Edge, 1994

³ Etling, Kathy. "Of Owls and Interstates." Missouri Conservationist. Vol. 54, number 11, Nov 1993, pp 6-9

⁴ footnote 17 pg. 6 of greenfields

⁵ Our built & natural environment page 6

The town of Cedarburg, Wisconsin, has added language to its zoning codes that allows builders to create a greater number of lots than normally allowed in a development in exchange for dedicating additional open space. Under the ordinance, developers are permitted to increase the number of lots by up to 20 percent in exchange for clustering the development and preserving the balance as undeveloped open space.

Definitions

Brownfield: A property, often a former industrial site, where the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant may complicate expansion, redevelopment, or reuse.

Greyfields: An uncontaminated developed property that is no longer in use and is ready for revitalization. Most often refers to abandoned shopping malls or big-box stores.

Greenfields: Undeveloped areas such as farms and forests.

compact development practices when building in new areas can leave more open space untouched, and can reduce the need for roads that cut across important habitats.

🔗 **For more information, see the report “Endangered by Sprawl” at <http://smartgrowthamerica.org/ebsreport2.html>**

Regulations Governing Land Preservation

While no national law exists on the preservation of open space, the Endangered Species Act, the Brownfields Revitalization Act, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund all address issues of land preservation.

The Brownfields Revitalization Act of 2002 provides both the public and private sector with tools and incentives

At least a dozen states have begun to create **comprehensive conservation plans** that systematically identify and preserve important habitats for native species.



to clean up and redevelop contaminated sites such as old factories. The EPA offers grants for the assessment and cleanup of brownfields, and generally requires a robust public outreach process as a condition of these funds.⁸

The Endangered Species Act, administered by the US Fish and Wildlife service, tracks and protects the more than 1,200 species that have been listed as endangered. While the act provides powerful protection, prohibiting the destruction of endangered species or their habitats, its species-by-species approach has had limited success

in preserving ecosystems. The act offers land owners the opportunity to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), which allows some development of habitat if conservation measures are taken. Several regions have developed HCPs that cover multiple species. (see box)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a federal program that provides matching grants to states and local governments for acquiring new recreation lands. The fund is intended to stimulate the acquisition of open spaces, recreational planning, and enhanced recreational opportunities through the construction of playgrounds, bicycle paths, and hiking trails. The Department of Interior's State Wildlife Grants Program is available to state fish and wildlife agencies that complete a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan by 2005.

Many states and localities have their own plans and regulations for the preservation of open space, including the protection of farmland, and many have funds to purchase endangered open space for preservation. A few places have established urban growth boundaries or other methods of designating areas for development and areas for preservation. Some communities allow development rights to be transferred from valuable farms or woodlands to areas more appropriate for development. Your town or county may also have a local parks ordinance. The laws, regulations and funds now in use across the country are too numerous to mention here but deserve investigation.

① To get more localized information, please see our list of state and local contacts in Appendix A.

At least a dozen states have begun to create comprehensive conservation plans that systematically identify and preserve important habitats for native species. The heart of many of these plans is a 'biomap' of species

and ecosystems. For example, Pima, County, Arizona, (Tempe) needed to protect a listed endangered species, the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl. Instead of a narrowly focused plan, the county has adopted a comprehensive conservation plan for the Sonoran Desert that is aimed at protecting more than 50 vulnerable species. The plan has been integrated into the region's comprehensive land use plans. The plan categorizes lands for protection and has been adopted alongside ordinances to promote higher quality growth.⁹

Not all open space is the same

Most valuable for wildlife and water quality are contiguous open areas that maintain habitat corridors and protect the diversity of species living in your region. Preservation of open space must be strategic: isolated patches of grass or trees add little to the local ecosystem.

New development and preserving valuable open space

In evaluating the impact of potential developments on open space, the first step is to evaluate the location. Is an endangered species present? Will the development remove valuable farmland or forests? Check with your state's Natural Heritage Program to find out more about your local eco-system. Also consider the possibility that the development of an open field within an already built-up area will allow preservation of more valuable open space elsewhere.

Then, look at the proposed design of the development. What does the development do to protect any valuable land? Review state and local land preservation laws, as well as local plans, zoning codes, and parks ordinances to see if



the development is in compliance. Ask for the preservation of any signature trees on the site. If the development includes a major roadway, investigate techniques to allow safe wildlife crossings. Another way to preserve useful open space is to incorporate a multi-use trail or greenway into a new development, or to preserve trees near the banks of streams and rivers. Somewhat higher density can make

it much easier to preserve high-quality open space: many communities are finding this to be a tradeoff that works. For more information on these topics, visit the National Resources Defense Council's resources at <http://www.nrdc.org/cities/smartGrowth/> or The Trust for Public Land's web site at <http://www.tpl.org/>.

¹ Measuring Sprawl

² EPA fact sheet on head island effect

³ SGA drought report

⁴ *Protecting Water Resources with High Density Developments*, us EPA white paper forthcoming.

⁵ For more on low impact design, visit <http://www.lid-stormwater.net/>

⁶ Our built & natural environment page 6

⁷ Our built & natural environment pg 11

⁸ <http://www.epa.gov/swerosps/bf/about.htm>

⁹ The Biodiversity D



Chapter 5. True Stories from the Development Front

Every plan, project or development proposal is unique because each occurs in a time and place with its own context and background. The experiences of others who have found themselves in similar circumstances can teach us much about what is likely to work, or not.



Every plan, project or development proposal is unique in many respects, because each occurs in a time and place with its own context and background. Nevertheless, the experiences of others who have found themselves in similar circumstances can teach us much about what is likely to work, or not. It is with that knowledge that we offer the true stories that follow.

The first story tells about how neighbors of the Clarendon Metro rail station in **Arlington, VA**, worked together with city officials to craft plans for a high-quality urban village around the station, then fought successfully for their plan when it was nearly undermined by the arrival of cookie-cutter, “big box” retail.

In **Atlanta**, residents of the Home Park neighborhood had to go to school in a hurry when a developer proposed to turn the contaminated site of a former steel mill into an extension of the city’s ultra-urban Midtown district. Realizing that a city hungry for reinvestment after years of decline could not turn down such an opportunity, the residents became deeply engaged and won numerous improvements to the plan, along with amenities they have come to appreciate.

Situated just across the river from **Charleston, SC**, the town of Mt. Pleasant was roiled a few years ago by a proposal to build a new village modeled after the area’s classic older

neighborhoods. Although it harkened back to an earlier era, the l’On development was a big change from recent practices, and residents were upset that approvals moved too fast for them to fully digest the implications. They fought back and won “concessions” from the developer that made the project, which has proved very popular, less affordable to ordinary folks, a move that many regret today.

The story of the Pleasant Hill rail station in **Walnut Creek, CA**, illustrates how the increasingly popular public design workshops known as charettes are helping communities work through thorny issues around new development. After the local government’s initial plans for the area collapsed under the weight of opposition from citizens who felt shut out, officials literally went back to the drawing board, with results that everyone felt some ownership in.

Presenting a different twist, the tale of Envision **Utah** shows how ordinary citizens looked beyond their immediate neighborhoods to help shape a growth and development strategy for their entire metro area and state.

We hope these stories are helpful. If you have one of your own that you’d like to share, we’d love to hear about it. Send a note to citizen@smartgrowthamerica.org.

When neighbors defend their plan:

The Clarendon Station story



In the late 1960s Arlington County, VA, in metro Washington, D.C., committed to concentrating its development around the 11 Metro rail stations in the county. At the time, the county called this a “bull’s-eye” approach, focusing density on transit stations while keeping other areas lower-density. Arlington now touts its Urban Villages as places “where one can live, work, shop and play...no car required”™. Today, 92 percent of the county’s commercial development and 31,000 residents are in the metro corridors, while high-density development is taking place on just 7 percent of the county’s land. This is the story of how one station-area neighborhood navigated the changes.

Situated right outside of Washington D.C., Arlington County, VA, is home to one of the first efforts to bringing smart-growth planning and development to an aging suburb. Arlington’s story centers on a string of five stations on the Metro rapid rail line, known as the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. Each station area has its own rich history. In the 1960’s, as the construction of I-66 was nearing the completion of its eastward extension into the nation’s capital, Arlington County was also drawing up plans for the new Metrorail system. The County made a pivotal decision in asking that the rail system be routed underground through its older downtown strip rather than in the I-66 right-of-way. The County intended to spur economic development, and decades later the transportation, community, environmental and economic outcomes are still defying expectations. While the decision

on mapping and location were key, the real story is how the County developed a planning and community input process to get things done.

Once the County secured the in-town alignment, planners developed the cornerstone of corridor planning, the “bull’s-eye” zoning plan. This planning tool would locate the ultra-high density development within a quarter of a mile of station exits, and taper the height and bulk down to the older single-family home neighborhoods.

Striking a bargain with the neighbors

The County struck a deal with residents: If we can plan for this density—almost 50 million square feet—we will enforce the tapering and draw growth boundaries across which density will not jump. The communities surrounding the

five stations would be involved in planning each station area, none of the stations would host park and ride lots and each station's development program would be unique. In addition, the stations were spaced no more than one mile apart to further enhance the development program. Any changes over time would be made through a public process to update plans.

Clarendon, which is the middle station in the R-B Corridor, sits at the center of what once was Arlington's thriving downtown. Penney's, Sears, Woolworth's and many other stores opened as the County evolved from a sleepy agricultural area to a new automobile-friendly suburb. As with many inner-ring suburbs, however, the late 1950s and 1960s saw a decline as the further-flung suburbs like Fairfax County attracted families. In the R-B Corridor plans, Clarendon was designated as the "urban village" with a mix of shopping, restaurants, smaller office buildings and housing.

A mega store proposal and a neighborhood push for density

Over the years, the development cycles that focused on Ballston and Rosslyn skipped over Clarendon, but in 1994, a "big-box" home improvement chain set its sights on a 13-acre vacant lot a block from the metro entrance.

The nearby neighborhoods knew development would be coming, but the initial proposals for the big box store didn't look anything like the "urban village" described in the planning document. Most importantly, the auto-oriented design and large parking lot worked against the plan for pedestrian and bike-friendly streets.

As the neighbors began to point out the inconsistencies between the big box proposal and the "urban village" plan, county leaders signaled that the proposal was the sort of shot in the arm needed to overcome the sagging economy



Park & Row Houses. At Clarendon Market Commons, central shops and condominiums are buffered from the older houses by well-designed rowhouses and a public park.



Car lot. Before Clarendon began to redevelop as an urban village, much of the area was dedicated to surface parking and car lots like this one, four short blocks from the subway station.

of the early 1990's. The neighbors realized that just saying "No" was not an option. Instead, the three civic associations that bordered the area got together and decided on a new strategy to pursue the question of what a big box store would look like in an urban village and how it would operate to complement the rich transit system in the area.

Over the course of several months the neighbors keyed in on not only the planning documents, but urban planning resources, information on transit, building walkable communities, and new material being developed by New Urbanists. The neighbors, through meetings and testimony, were able to convince County leaders that they could influence project details, even as these growing companies gained a reputation for sticking to their conventional big box prototypes.

In a move that goes against convention, the neighbors argued for more density in and around the site, as had been

Arlington boasts one of the lowest overall tax rates in the D.C. area, since the program of mixed use development spreads the tax burden across many uses.

called for in the County's planning documents. In their research, the neighbors found that the urban village attributes they sought, such as walkability, transit options, a thriving restaurant district and retention of small business, would be impossible without density. The work of the residents paid off and eventually the company backed off its plans.

Within a matter of months, a Chicago developer, McCaffery Interests, came in, viewed the urban village plans and said "We'll do it." On the former vacant site now sits the Market Common mixed-use center. The center contains almost 1 million square feet of housing, retail, parking and parks. During the public process, the neighbors pushed on the details, such as the size of open space, sidewalks and operations. But they did not say "no". Market Common is now the center of the community, and provides much-needed retail, neighborhood connections to Clarendon and gathering places.

Addressing parking and traffic concerns

While the neighbors were engaged throughout the process, they did experience the expected worries that arise with large development projects, such as traffic, parking, and neighborhood character. Now that the project has been built, it is useful to review how the project has panned out.

First, traffic in the corridor has increased only slightly over the past 30 years, even with the addition of tens of millions of square feet of development. Traffic engineers and the county had expected much more congestion, but underestimated how many auto trips would be replaced by walking and transit. There are some intersections that have seen problems, but growth in the region as a whole is a major contributor.

Parking has also been a surprise. The County had worked with McCaffery to reduce the number of spaces

given the predictions of non-auto trips. Even with the reductions, Market Common found it still had built too many spaces for the project. They now offer public parking in the evenings for a nominal fee, which helps support the restaurants in the area. The county instituted parking restrictions and fine-tuned other policies in the neighborhoods to keep the local streets from becoming parking for the nearby subway stations. The growth in the Corridor has been a boon for all Arlington residents, since this thin slice of land brings in more than half of the County's tax revenue.

Arlington boasts one of the lowest overall tax rates in the D.C. area, since the program of mixed use development spreads the tax burden across many uses.

Challenges come with success

The success has brought its own challenges. The popularity of the station area has boosted housing prices beyond the reach of most families, entry-level professionals and lower-income workers. The county has had some luck in bringing in affordable housing, but with mixed results. Rules that require set asides for affordable units are negotiated down and density bonuses are not popular with residents, who see them as a departure from the original promise on development limits.

Addressing the affordability problem will require a comprehensive effort on the part of the county. Meanwhile, some residents have begun to resist the building boom in the corridor. In addition, residents still must push to get high-quality design and materials. Nonetheless, the positive aspects far outweigh the pressures and serve as a great case study in how neighbors can say "yes" while retaining neighborhood character and taking advantage of what new development can bring.

Atlantic Station

From contaminated site to new city, with neighbors' support

From a comfortable distance, just about everyone agreed on the positive aspects of the Atlantic Station redevelopment. It would clean and reclaim 138 acres of a former steel mill that otherwise would be left contaminated and rusting on a site across the interstate from Atlanta's vibrant Midtown district.

Billed as a “live, work, play” community by developer Jim Jacoby, this city-within-a-city would have homes for 10,000 people, offices for 30,000 workers, and shops, restaurants, and services. Concentrating this growth in the heart of the city, where it can connect to existing infrastructure and a rail transit system, spares the several thousand acres that similar development would occupy in Atlanta's sprawling suburbs.

Being close to all this action, however, many residents of the adjacent Home Park and Loring Heights neighborhoods initially were leery of the massive development and the plans to connect the new community with their own streets of mostly single-family houses.

“People are afraid of the unknown,” says Tim State, head of the Home Park Community Improvement Association (HPCIA). “A brownfield next to you is more comfortable than not knowing what is going in next to you.” But instead of simply resisting the development, he and other community leaders took advantage of several forums that gave them a say in managing the change that would come.

The project's supporters understood that neighboring residents would be worried. Among them was a statewide conservation group, The Georgia Conservancy, which saw Atlantic Station as a win both for the environment and the city, if it were done right. As the project was working its way through complicated environmental and design processes, the Conservancy hosted a 13-week planning workshop for Home Park residents designed to clarify their own priorities for the site and the neighborhood. Home Park neighbors also participated in the city's rezoning process and managed to have many of their concerns addressed in the 28 conditions that were set on the zoning change.

Next came a ‘stakeholder involvement process’ mandated by the development's participation in a special EPA development program. Andres Duany, the well-known designer of Seaside, FL and other new urbanist developments, was brought to Atlanta to conduct a weekend charrette on improving walkability at the development. (*For a discussion of charettes and their usefulness, see page 64.*) Developer Jacoby set up a Design Control Committee, giving neighborhood



Tim State's Tips for Working with Developers

As head of his neighborhood association, Tim State participated in the planning and negotiations leading to the redevelopment of a defunct steel mill in Home Park, a neighborhood of 600 acres and 1200 homes that will grow to close to 10,000. Here are some lessons he's learned:

The Key is Building Relationships and Open Communication

1 Neighborhoods have something developers want, and are at the beginning of the process.

2 In some cases, developers need nothing from the neighborhood to move forward.

3 Never say no without listing a reason why or alternative options your community would support.



“Atlantic Station has added value to our neighborhood. It has added **economic value to our homes, and provided amenities: **park space** and **retail services** that are desperately needed.”**

representatives power to vote on the design of buildings and a new bridge over the downtown interstate, which was a key access point to the site and the neighborhoods.

“There are parts of the plans [for Atlantic Station] you can point to and say, ‘that change is a direct result of one neighbor’s suggestion at one particular Saturday session,’” says State, who believes the developer truly valued the communities’ input.

Among those changes: a traffic plan designed to allow Home Park residents access to Atlantic Station while minimizing cut-through traffic. Atlantic Station Vice President Brian Leary jokes, “We had one good idea: clean up a brownfield. Other people added ideas that we absorbed and incorporated.”

Far from succumbing to “meeting fatigue”, the Home Park residents continue to arrange for more: The neighborhood began its own master planning process to help guide future development in the fast-changing neighborhood.

The Environmental Benefits of Atlantic Station

The project provided both region-wide and very local environmental benefits. On the local level, the project cleaned up of the 150 tons of contaminated soil along with a poorly operating sewer. The developer also donated two trees to every neighboring homeowner. On the regional level, the EPA has found that Atlantic Station will generate 50 percent less driving and dramatically lower levels of pollutants that contribute to smog (between 75 and 300 percent less) than an equally sized conventional development built in the suburbs.¹

¹ *Solving Sprawl* 49.



4 Define your community's desires in a positive space.

5 Develop your community's relationship with neighboring neighborhoods.

6 When all else fails, don't be afraid.

7 Fight fair and with respect. Be reasonable and responsible.

Because of these air quality benefits, the EPA designated the project as “beneficial” to air quality. This was critical for approval of a major piece of public infrastructure tied to the project: the new bridge spanning the I-75/85 freeway that divides Atlanta’s downtown. The bridge includes extra-wide sidewalks with a shade canopy, bike lanes, and the development runs a shuttle to the MARTA subway station across the freeway and a future rail connection.

Thanks largely to a large park and pond at the project’s core, the EPA has calculated that the redevelopment of the old steel mill will reduce the amount

of hard, “impervious” surface at the site by 285,000 square feet, significantly reducing the volume of surface water runoff. A comparable greenfield development would dramatically increase impervious surface and increase the volume of runoff in the watershed by 14 to 19 million square feet.

“Atlantic Station has added value to our neighborhood,” says State. “It has added economic value to our homes, and provided amenities for the community that were not there before: park space and retail services that are desperately needed.”

The I'On Story:

How a once-controversial development made it legal (almost) to build Charleston again

When a developer proposes something out of the ordinary, it can be difficult to assess the impacts and grasp what is actually planned—even when the project aims to recreate the most-loved aspects of an older community. And when local officials act before citizens have a chance to study up, the results can be contentious—and messy—as folks in Mt. Pleasant, SC learned in the course of the development of I'On Village.

The city of Mt. Pleasant, SC, just across the Cooper River from Charleston, began life in 1680 as a compact, coastal village. Over the last few decades, however, the territory surrounding the core followed the patterns of the rest of the country: randomly placed shopping centers and subdivisions, with lots of parking lots and few ways to walk.

These days the walkable old town center is a sought-after location with upscale shops and a wide mix of housing sizes and styles, most of which fetch above-average prices. In the 1990s, the town's leaders decided they could use more of that sort of character in the city. Recognizing that their current zoning rules all but mandated 60s-era suburbs and outlawed building old Mt. Pleasant or Charleston, they adopted a Master Plan that included a new “traditional neighborhood” zoning.

But when developer Vince Graham actually proposed a large, pedestrian-friendly community modeled on parts



I'On has won the support of a surprising number of its former opponents.

of old Mt. Pleasant and Charleston, set between two more conventional subdivisions, some residents of the city were skeptical. Despite adoption of the Master Plan, the city had never actually changed the zoning, so the development needed special approval.

To help him plan his new village, Graham hired some of the designers of Seaside, Florida. His vision won the support of planners, historians and environmentalists who saw infill development as a good alternative to sprawl. But the Town Council initially rejected the plan, driven by neighbors' fears of increased traffic on the adjoining arterial road and a worry that smaller lots and townhouses would depress property values. Neighbors were even concerned that the planned traffic roundabout would become a "circle of death."

In response to these concerns, Graham scaled back the project considerably, removing all of the apartments, dropping from 850 units to 759 units, cutting commercial floor space by two-thirds and eliminating some connecting streets to neighboring developments. The project still proposed a mix of house sizes and types on lots of varying size with a town square ringed with shops, all served by streets that did not end in cul de sacs, but connected in a loose grid. The proposal was approved in 1997 by the town council, but that action sparked a successful campaign to defeat council members, and a small group of neighbors went to court, still concerned about traffic impacts. The neighbors ultimately lost and construction began in 2000.

Since that time, I'On has won the support of a surprising number of its former opponents. Home values

in the development are higher than the surrounding area; in fact, prices have gone so high that some in the area regret having killed the more affordable attached houses. The ice cream store and plaza outside the small row of shops have become gathering points for I'On residents and surrounding neighborhoods.

One former opponent of the development, Steve Brock, now says the area could support more commercial development, and admits that the traffic problems he envisioned never materialized. He praises the roundabout as a "visionary concept that works amazingly well." One of the leading opponents, Henry Thomas, calls I'On "an example from which Mt. Pleasant can learn," and has worked to build bridges between his neighborhood and I'On. Thomas even says he recently offered a piece of his property, which backs up to I'On, to the developers in case they wanted to take down the house on the site in order to create a street connection between the two neighborhoods.

The developer, Vince Graham, believes I'On was such a struggle because little had been done to educate the town's leadership or the citizens on the concepts behind such development. From the perspective of the neighbors, the town council seemed unable to address their concerns and they ended up feeling railroaded. Brock now advises any community presented with a large, complex development to "take a breath and study it" before jumping into an unnecessarily contentious approval process.

 [For more I'on Village, see: www.ionvillage.com.](http://www.ionvillage.com)



Helping Pleasant Hill Live Up to Its Name

How a public design workshop called a charette did the trick

By Bill Lennertz, *National Charette Institute*

Increasingly popular for high-impact projects, charettes are accelerated design workshops that bring all parties together in one place for four or more consecutive days to collaborate on development plans. The forum allows everyone from architect to retail analyst to neighbor to address their needs and concerns in the design process. The story below is an example of how they effective they can be.

Taking its name from the walnut groves that covered the beautiful valley west of Mount Diablo, Walnut Creek, CA, is home to residents either associated with the walnut industry or relocated from the urban San Francisco Bay area.

Prior to the building of interstate highway I-680, the area was predominantly bungalow and ranch homes nestled among the orchards. The arrival of a major highway interchange, adjacent to the Pleasant Hill station of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), began to change what was once a quiet agricultural valley into a regional transportation hub.

In the early 1980s, Contra Costa County adopted a plan for the 140-acre area around the station that called for a high-density mix of housing, offices and shops. Since 1986, more than 2,400 housing units, two hotels,

offices with more than 4,000 employees, and more than \$40 million in major public infrastructure improvements have been built within walking distance of the Pleasant Hill BART station.

Because that development came with additional traffic, by the late 1980s many residents of the surrounding neighborhoods believed that any additional development, other than houses and small shops, would push the traffic problem over the edge. This made it very difficult to fulfill a longstanding commitment to accommodate future growth on the 18 acres of parking next to the station.

The failed attempts

During the 1980s, a handful of developer-driven programs were proposed for the Pleasant Hill BART Station

People often are on their guard because they have had **negative experiences** with development. They may have participated in a **poor public process** that left them feeling unheard. Three minutes in a public meeting to voice one's opinion just isn't a satisfying experience. **A charrette changes that dynamic.**



area. These failed attempts were primarily commercial developments with heavy office or entertainment retail uses.

Although the surface parking lot had always been intended for future development, the county and BART required the developer to build a parking garage to replace the 1,477 commuter spaces being lost. That was on top of the parking needed for the new development itself. This added cost meant limiting development to large-scale commercial uses that could pay for it.

The idea of a huge new shopping complex raised the objections of both neighbors and surrounding cities. The neighbors were concerned by the traffic impacts and the cities were concerned about competition with their own commercial developments. Citizens were given limited opportunities to provide input on the development proposals and when they were engaged there were too few options on the table. It looked to the citizen participants as though the heavy commercial and entertainment uses were a foregone conclusion and that their input would have no impact on the outcomes.

The solution: **A collaborative process**

In 1999, after a failed attempt to plan a regional entertainment complex on the property, County Supervisor Donna Gerber sponsored a series of lectures on new urbanism. Gerber was interested in the potential of this approach to provide needed services, quality housing, and community amenities while minimizing increases in traffic.

When the community responded positively to the lectures, Gerber proposed a public design workshop, called a charrette, to plan a project for the site. A charrette is distinguished from other meetings by its intense, collaborative nature, lasting over several days. It is an accelerated planning process that brings all parties together in one place for four or more consecutive days to create feasible development plans.

Charrettes don't deal with single development issues in isolation. They move all design and development

How Charettes Work

The principles

1 Charettes succeed because they involve the public earlier and more consistently throughout the planning process.

2 Second, the community is shown that their input will have an impact—they are not simply being asked to "rubber stamp" an already-designed plan.

3 Third, they result in concrete zoning and code changes that ensure the project will be built as planned.

Collaboration

Working collaboratively helps to create a long lasting plan based on each individual's unique contributions. In order to work, all viewpoints have to be included.



“The charrette process has developed a plan that no one group of people could—it has drawn the best from those who participated.”

issues along the same track to allow each issue to inform the decision-making for related issues. For instance, transit issues are considered in light of economic and market feasibility issues along with zoning plans and building codes.

The charrette is also a democratic process in that all voices and viewpoints are aired and considered, and it involves all disciplines from the start in an orchestrated series of “feedback loops” that chronicle decisions and opinions made along the way.

In this respect, it is as much an educational event as a planning exercise. The result is that everyone—from key decision-maker to citizen—becomes aware of the complexities of development and design issues, and everyone works together to try to accommodate them.

That doesn't mean the entire community must take a week off from work to hold a charrette. The design team works continuously during the charrette, but all others come together at specific times as a community or small working groups. And anyone is free to check on the progress of the drawings, discussions, and envisioning plans throughout the charrette. In this way, it does not consume huge blocks of time for days on end from residents or officials.

To plan the Pleasant Hill BART project and conduct the charrette process, a team of consultants, consisting of planners, architects, transportation engineers, and economists was selected by a steering committee representing the County Redevelopment Agency, BART, the designated developer, and the neighborhood.

The consultant team held an initial public meeting six weeks before the start of the charrette to inform the public about the charrette process and to solicit their ideas for the neighborhood. The fact that the participants were being asked for their input before the beginning of the design work let them know that their contributions would have an impact on the outcome.

During the meeting, citizens worked in small groups to discuss how the project related to the area and what a vision for the developed site might look like. The consultants then took this input and combined it with the other critical information such as market demand, financing requirements, and site constraints to develop alternative concepts for the site.

A month later, the consultant team of architects, planners, engineers and economists held a six-day charrette that was open to interested citizens and included stakeholder meetings with neighbors, a technical advisory committee, bicycle and pedestrian groups, BART representatives and others.

The primary point of contention for the neighborhood was traffic. Over the years, people watched as traffic on Treat Boulevard became worse and worse. The most vocal neighbors held the firm conviction that development of the scale that had been discussed would make traffic a great deal worse. They distrusted the existing traffic studies because they were based on the county's two-year-old traffic counts, which they viewed as outdated. During the charrette it quickly became apparent to the design team that in order to make any progress these issues would have to be addressed directly.

On the second day of the charrette, the neighborhood leadership emphasized the problem with the validity of the traffic counts. The charrette manager and county planners then decided at that moment to order new counts to begin the next day. The announcement of this quick action to the neighbors was an important breakthrough because it validated citizen concerns that previously had been brushed aside. This was one of the profound moments during the charrette that helped to establish trust between the neighbors and the county after years of mutual ill will.

Still, participants had deep doubts that traffic could be designed away. "No matter how well you design it," they insisted, "the traffic will only get worse." The design team recognized that the project could not move forward without a concrete answer to this objection so they scheduled an ad hoc transportation meeting for the next evening of the charrette.

Sixty people attended this meeting to hear from the consulting engineers. First, the consultants reviewed the growth trends in the county. They showed that high demand probably meant the development proposed for the site would still be built somewhere else within the county if not at this specific location. Most importantly, they

showed building in the conventional spread-out fashion would make the overall traffic problem in the county far worse. In other words, because of its proximity to the major transportation access points, the station area was the best place for this development.

The final proof was in the analysis that showed, to everyone's surprise, that the alternatives under consideration in the charrette would add only 5% more traffic to Treat Boulevard. Once the traffic issue was addressed to everyone's satisfaction, the charrette was able to proceed, focusing on the creation of a design solution for the property.

The consultant team worked with all of the input from these meetings and developed alternative concepts. These concepts were brought back to the stakeholders and general public numerous times throughout the week at public meetings and open houses and were revised according to additional input. The consultant team took the refined plans and synthesized them into one comprehensive plan representing the best of all ideas.

In the course of the six-day process a plan emerged that would guide the look and feel of the project, installation of walkways and parks, street and transit circulation, and more. The resulting consensus vision ended the six-year deadlock. In 2002, the board of County Supervisors unanimously approved the plan with no attendee speaking in opposition.

"The charrette process invited my neighbors and me to share our opinions and suggestions in designing a positive addition to our community," said charrette participant Steve Potter. "The charrette process has developed a plan that no one group of people could—it has drawn the best from those who participated."

A transparent process with well-defined roles

In order to build trust and broad-based ownership, the process must be open and transparent. This way no single interest can dominate.

Short feedback loops

Working toward small agreements and building on them over time keeps people building on their successes and moving in the same direction.

Necessary data at the ready

To avoid uninformed decisions, all relevant data, experts and points of view must be present for well-informed decision-making to occur.

Envision Utah

When the metro region is your neighborhood

While everyone worries most about what happens just down the street, some citizens take a big-picture view of what constitutes their “neighborhood”. In Utah, since the late 1990s a highly unusual planning effort called Envision Utah has involved thousands of citizens in making decisions about how and where their state will focus its growth. A principal mover behind this undertaking has been Robert Grow, a now-retired businessman who sees citizen-centered planning as vital not only to the state’s economic future, but also to preserving options for his children and grandchildren.

“Where will our metro area grow? Where will my children live? What choices will they have? What will be their future?”

These were the questions Robert Grow was mulling in 1997, when he agreed to be the first Chair for Envision Utah, a public-private partnership created in 1997 to develop a growth strategy for Utah. At the time, Grow was the president and chief operating officer of Geneva Steel. As a member of the advisory board for Utah’s Department of Community & Economic Development, he had had occasion to view all the projections about the state’s growth, and he knew Utah was not prepared to shape it in a way that would preserve the state’s stunning beauty and high quality of life.

While his home state is largely rural, the vast majority of its population—and most of the projected future growth—is concentrated in an environmentally sensitive corridor along

the Wasatch Mountains, stretching 100 miles to the north and south of Salt Lake City. The population of this sliver of Utah is expected to swell from 1.6 million in 2000 to 5 million by 2050.

The mountains, lakes and deserts of Utah, 80 percent of which is owned by the United States, limit the amount of land available for communities to expand. Planners estimate that about 1,000 square miles of developable land remains in the Greater Wasatch Area. Grow and other Utah leaders worried that, without some immediate action, the area will soon be overwhelmed by traffic problems and growing personal and social costs.

Efforts to address the state’s growth challenges were first begun by the Coalition for Utah’s Future, composed of a diverse group of community leaders. Under their leadership, a Growth Summit was held in November 1995. In 1997, Envision Utah was formed, with the purpose of studying urban trends in the GWA and developing a growth strategy that could be broadly supported.

Led by a coalition of business, civic and government leaders, Envision Utah began by listening to people, thousands of them. Citizens were invited to a series of more than 150 public workshops where, through innovative planning tools, they were able to show how they wanted to shape future land use, transportation and open space preservation. Then, Envision Utah asked every household in the region to complete a survey on the region's future. Ultimately, nearly 17,500 Greater Wasatch Area residents filled out and returned the Envision Utah growth survey—approximately 6,277 via Envision Utah's on-line survey and 11,214 by mail. In addition, nearly 2,000 residents attended one of 50 town meetings.

In the end, citizens said they wanted more investment in public transit and affordable housing, more reliance on cycling and walking, more preservation of open spaces and more town-like development along key transportation spines. The chosen Quality Growth Strategy departs dramatically from current trends, conserving 171 square miles of land that otherwise would be developed; offering expanded choices in housing and neighborhood types; reducing vehicle emissions and traffic congestion; and saving \$4.5 billion on transportation, water, sewer and utility infrastructure.

Envision Utah's efforts have gained support from the state, local governments, developers, conservationists, and the general public. Since January 1997, Envision Utah has seen dramatic shifts in public opinion regarding planning for quality growth. The state legislature passed the Quality Growth Act establishing a Quality Growth Commission; a region-wide rail transit system is up and running, with plans for future expansion; and developers are building new and innovative projects incorporating Envision Utah's Quality Growth Strategies.



I am involved with this effort because I want my children and grandchildren to have choices.

— Robert Grow

“I am involved with this effort because I want my children and grandchildren to have a choice about whether and how much both spouses must work to provide for their children and to afford to buy a home,” Robert Grow.

🔗 [Find out more at www.envisionutah.org](http://www.envisionutah.org)

THE ROANOKE TIMES

Monday, February 21, 2005

Working together toward smart growth

Developers of Colonial Green deserve a nod for their response to local residents' concerns.

The responsiveness of the developer to residents, and residents' willingness to compromise, are examples that should be touted as really smart growth.

The months of back and forth between developers of Colonial Green and nearby homeowners illustrate that the zoning process can work.

Colonial Green LLC, of Blacksburg, didn't get everything it sought in its initial site plans for the upscale project on the Roanoke-Roanoke County border, and homeowners still have some worries. But the two groups' willingness to compromise furthers a project that will give the area a vibrant neighborhood where residents not only live but shop and recreate.

The appeal of Colonial Green is its urban village concept, complete with green space, office space, shops and mixed-income housing—amenities that would attract single professionals, young

families and empty-nesters.

Such a development is essential to Roanoke's livability and prosperity. City officials can point to such communities as a valuable amenity in attracting prospective businesses.

The project now moving toward a happy ending didn't start that way. When plans for the 23-acre development were unveiled, neighboring residents complained about its density, size and location.

They worried that it would cause traffic congestion, stormwater runoff and mean the end of nearby mature trees.

But in a laudable meeting of minds essential to advancing smart growth, the developer and residents met to discuss their

differences and try to work through them.

Developers packed up their tape measures, left their offices and met several times with residents and city planning staff at the site on Colonial Avenue.

The result is a revised project that earned the Roanoke Planning Commission's unanimous approval late last week and one that, though it is not to residents' complete liking, they can live with.

They didn't have to do it, but they did, so we're thankful," one homeowner said.

The responsiveness of the developer to residents, and residents' willingness to compromise, are examples that should be touted as really smart growth.



Chapter 6. Lessons from Local Heroes

Nothing speaks like the voice of experience. In this chapter we let some veterans share their hard-won insights from many years on the development front.

We'll hear from three citizen activists who have different lessons to share about when, where and under what conditions to engage developers directly, employ a mediator, join forces with other neighborhoods or hire a lawyer. Ken Snyder, whose organization specializes in helping citizens use up-to-date technology to evaluate development options, offers a synopsis of some of the hot planning tools you might encounter, or want to ask about using. And last we hear from a self-described progressive developer on his thoughts about how to make the development game more satisfying for all players.



IN HER OWN WORDS

Fighting to keep it real

Atlanta architect Peggy Whitaker recounts the struggle to fulfill the promise of a transit-oriented development in her neighborhood.

It was a huge shock to me that, over a very short period of time, I turned from a major supporter of the new “transit-oriented development” (TOD) announced for my neighborhood rapid transit station to a very loud NIMBY!

When in 1998 the city of Atlanta, real estate developer Carter & Associates and architects Cooper Carry announced that the 1,800 space patron parking lot and the desolate acreage around the Lindbergh MARTA (Metropolitan

Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority) station were to become a prototype TOD for MARTA, the surrounding urban neighborhoods of single family homes rejoiced! The “Main Street” concept of loft-living units over retail on a perfectly appointed boulevard above the train station, surrounded by other mixed-use components, such as condos, apartments, hotels, office and a boutique grocery store planned by award winning architects and land planners sounded too good to be true. Turns out that it was!

The station’s adjacent urban neighborhoods of Peachtree Hills, Garden Hills, Peachtree Heights East and Peachtree Park welcomed the Lindbergh TOD, which we envisioned as an opportunity for MARTA to provide the pedestrian and shuttle connection we needed to reduce and improve local traffic congestion, and to make

The “Main Street” concept of loft-living units over retail on a perfectly appointed boulevard above the train station... planned by award winning architects and land planners sounded too good to be true. Turns out that it was!

Author Validates Her Critique

From a case study of Lindbergh in “The New Transit Town,” by Hank Dittmar, et al (2004)

Community involvement is essential to creating good projects. MARTA didn't involve the community in what turned out to be the most critical decision of all—whether BellSouth was the right tenant. It was as if MARTA was so eager to accommodate this large corporate tenant that the neighborhoods no longer mattered.

TOD projects should be **integrated into their surroundings**. Investments in pedestrian infrastructure and streetscape improvements is key. Lindbergh is designed for those



Peggy Whitaker bangs at the “door” of the as-yet unfilled retail space at the Lindbergh development, which the developers have covered with images of the street life to come.

our close-in neighborhoods even more attractive by creatively integrating the new station-area development with the neighborhoods.

As a result of the requirement for all but three of the 48 acres involved to be rezoned from “commercial and light industrial” to “mixed use”, the surrounding neighborhoods’ residents were invited to attend public hearings given by the developer where the “Main Street” concept was unveiled and the consent of those neighbors

was sought. We loved it! Until, slowly, the “real deal” was unearthed.

The true scale of the project emerged when neighborhood leaders innocently asked to see the plan for pedestrian connectivity to the station from the neighborhoods. These neighborhoods were developed in the 1920’s as some of the first auto-oriented suburbs, and so they were built with wide streets and no sidewalks! For example, even though my house is less than a mile away from the MARTA station, walking in the busy roadside is the only way to get there on foot.

Yet Marta officials told us that, “There won’t be any sidewalks because we have no money for that.” Our neighborhood leaders are pretty well-versed in the language and technical aspects of development. A TOD without pedestrian connectivity? The neighborhoods became suspicious and soon discovered that the “market driven” office buildings mentioned in passing by the developer would actually be four BellSouth office towers (over 2 million square feet) with companion 20,000 parking spaces in three parking structures.

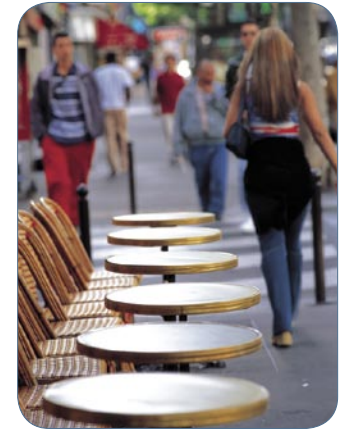
The neighbors and this architect rebelled! No sidewalks and now 20,000 parking spaces on top of a transit station! Transit-oriented developments are supposed to provide places to live, work, play and shop where driving is not required. Parking ratios are typically well below conventional requirements. With that much parking, the Lindbergh TOD was estimated to attract 40,000 new car trips per day when the project was completed. How was this a “transit oriented development?” we asked.

Neighborhood negotiators representing the four neighborhood associations demanded, and got, a nationally known mediator to facilitate a series of meetings with the city, MARTA and the developer (BellSouth refused to

come to the table). In more than two dozen meetings over three months, neighborhood representatives attempted to negotiate for fewer parking spaces, pedestrian connectivity, traffic calming in the neighborhoods, a neighborhood shuttle to the station, electric station cars, some affordable or workforce housing, a guarantee that the condos and apartments would be built at the same time as the office buildings. We also asked that all building owners be required to join the existing commute-alternatives organization in Buckhead. We essentially lost on all requests except for the last.

We were told that the number of parking spaces could not be substantially reduced because the BellSouth employees did not have a “transit ridership ethic” and the majority of those employees, according to a BellSouth study, did not live on a MARTA line. The negotiations ended when two of the four neighborhoods involved agreed to stop negotiations and sign the developer’s agreement which satisfied the goals specific to their neighborhoods.

Ultimately, four and a half years after the original announcement of the TOD, the Lindbergh development—still touted by some as a model TOD—contains only two



USING A MEDIATOR

A mediator can be brought into the process when all hope of an amicable agreement is lost, but before one party or the other goes to court.

While a good mediator is expensive, their fees are usually far less than the cost of a lawsuit. You can expect to pay an hourly fee, travel and per diem expenses.

In the case of Lindbergh, the mediator was chosen by the neighborhoods, but paid by the developer. Remember the mediator is like any other consultant; she will make every effort to get the result desired by the party who is footing the cost of the consultant’s fees. It is in the best interest of any neighborhood entering into negotiations where there is a mediator to share the cost of hiring the mediator with the opposition.

The best way to find any consultant is through the recommendation of those who have had satisfactory results from them in the past.

There is no use hiring a mediator unless you are sure that all parties involved are at the table and are negotiating in good faith—that is, willing to compromise for the common good, and would stand by the terms of the agreement reached.

If more than one neighborhood is involved, decide on your collective goals in advance, agree on the limits of concessions to be given, and put it all in writing! The Lindbergh negotiations failed on the neighborhood side because we had not done that. They failed on the developer’s side because the party making non-negotiable demands, BellSouth, was not even at the table.

who get there by car, not for those who might wander in from surrounding neighborhoods.

Too much parking hurts transit ridership, aggravates traffic and drives up construction costs.

Affordable housing needs to be a component of TOD. BellSouth is bringing thousands of jobs back to the city, but where will any but the highest-paid workers live?



The Lindbergh MARTA station has become the focal point of a transit-oriented development that Peggy Whitaker fought to improve.

BellSouth office towers and three parking structures, containing around 7,000 parking spaces for the office buildings and 1,800 spaces for MARTA patrons. The promised Main Street retail is a series of movie set-style storefronts painted on the walls of one side of the BellSouth towers and on the facade of the parking garage on the other side of the street. To my knowledge, the letters of agreement with other well publicized developers to be associated with the project still have not been converted to contracts to build hotels, condos, apartments, etc. on the

site. The traffic calming and other promised improvements remain on hold for lack of city matching funds, among other excuses.

What are the lessons learned?

Make sure in advance of any negotiations that all of the neighborhood parties have the same goals and are in agreement about the concessions the group is willing to make. Be clear and put your collective goals in writing!

Make sure that you, not the developer, choose and fund any facilitator involved in negotiations. The facilitator, whom you might think is impartial, will be loyal to the party who signs his paycheck!

Don't even think about going to court if you cannot match the deep pockets and staying power of the opposition. Neighborhood activists are usually not full time employees for a community cause. Giving the personal time and raising the money to fund a lawsuit takes lots of perseverance. And, just making your own community understand the issues involved and be in agreement is often a challenge.

Realistically evaluate the parties whom you are opposing. The stakes are very high and may be stacked against you if the city officials, state legislators, private developers and billion dollar corporations make up the opposition team!



“The most important thing I could teach anybody who wants to become involved is to listen and be respectful.”

KAY BEYNART'S STORY

From road-busting NIMBY to passionate smart-growth advocate

Some of the most effective advocates of smart growth came to that work as the result of a battle over a project proposed for their neighborhoods. Kay Beynart is one of those. In the mid-1970's, Kay was a stay-at-home mom in Atlanta's Buckhead, too busy raising three kids to pay much attention to development issues, until they literally landed in her backyard. The state highway department planned the extension of Georgia 400 through her neighborhood. Initially, Kay was upset mostly about the route of the highway, but as she took a closer look she began to see the project as a symptom of a larger problem where growth was concerned. Since then, she has been involved in countless rezonings and planning sessions and has become so expert that she has been appointed to key planning committees for the metro region. Here is her story, in her own words:

Soon after we moved into our first house we were told by some neighbors about a proposed major highway that would go right through our back yard. All I could think of was noise, dirty air and a huge loss of beautiful trees. From this potential battle, a civic association was born. There were enough true believers among us that we were able to stop the road for decades. And for most of those years, I was a worker bee—stuffing envelopes, delivering newsletters, helping to rally the troops for the endless hearings, etc.

Finally, I was the “last man standing” who was willing to lead the civic association. That very day I had the incredibly unnerving experience of having a TV camera stuck in my face. I had a crash course in the policy aspects of transportation planning: how decisions were made, who made them, how they were funded, and, most importantly,

the impact on land use and the environment. I quickly realized that this was not a Not In My Backyard issue, but one of fighting for good public policy. Simply, more roads lead to land use changes which lead to more congestion and more roads. A never-ending cycle. The fight for smarter policies became an all-consuming passion.

In the process, I got to know and work with elected and appointed officials and made friends with newspaper, television and radio reporters and with other neighborhood leaders across the city. I learned by trial and error how to be persuasive, succinct and credible.

As a neighborhood organization we argued that, instead of building a highway, an extension of the transit rail line through the proposed corridor would carry many more people at much less cost in funding and to the environment. The powers that be agreed with us—and put a MARTA line up the middle of the new highway: Two competing forms of transportation in the same corridor

We also argued to the city, which had supported the highway, that the road didn't just bring people into town, it also took them out. And that's exactly what happened—the North Fulton suburbs boomed and sprawled and the city continued to lose population. The road was projected to carry 100,000 cars in the tenth year. It carried that many the first year.

What I learned was that Atlanta needed walkable communities connected by transit so that people could live near where they worked and use their cars less. The term “smart growth” had not been coined then.

The most important thing I could teach anybody who wants to become involved is to listen and be respectful.



In my opinion everybody is a NIMBY. None of us likes change, especially if it affects our home. The solution is master planning as a community. Predictability greatly reduces fear and opposition.



Activists get involved for all kinds of reasons, and some are more beneficent than others. The potential for internecine warfare is high. Keeping your troops together means achieving consensus and keeping everyone plugged in, but then drawing the line at rudeness and disrespect.

When people took the time to come to a meeting I always felt it was important to let them have their say. There were enough times when the person you least expected to would come up with a great idea or become an indispensable volunteer.

In my opinion everybody is a NIMBY. None of us likes change, especially if it affects our home. The solution is master planning. If a community involves itself in a thoughtful planning process that builds understanding and consensus, the predictability of planned-for changes greatly reduces fear and opposition.

I believe developers can do the right thing and make money. They need educating as much as anybody. And lenders need to be educated. When a developer proposes something innovative, the banks go nuts. The irony is that what the market wants and needs are innovative, sustainable land use practices.

At the grassroots level, I believe strongly in a simple process that is fair to both a community and a developer. Prior to the filing of a zoning change, a meeting should be held which includes the city or county planning department, the developer, community representatives, and the elected official who represents them. A lot of knowledge can be exchanged and misunderstanding and misrepresentations can be avoided.

You can't learn smart growth in 30 minutes. If you've never thought about how to help create sustainable communities, you need to give yourself plenty of time to read, listen and learn.

Conclusion

“Heroes are not giant statues framed against a red sky, they are people who say ‘This is my community, and it’s my responsibility to make it better.’ Interweave all these communities, and you have an America that is back on its feet, a comfortable nation to live in again.” Tom McCall, Former Governor of Oregon, 1982

It would be a comfort to find a place where we could sit back and know that everything would always be the same, where we could relax with the knowledge that neighborhoods would be stable, farms would be farmed, and jobs would always be what and where they are right now. The paradox is that only our energy and engagement will preserve what we love and value about where we live.

This guidebook is really just a start, a few words to point you in the right direction as you find your way into the issues as processes that shape your community. As you can tell from the case studies and people described here, there are deep wells of wisdom about getting involved that we could only touch on. We urge you to keep digging for it,

through the resources we’ve cited and in your own place.

Then, if you have some time to spare from your own efforts, get back to us and let us know what’s working, what isn’t, and what more you need to know. We will use your experiences to help others like you, as well as the developers and planners who want to do the right thing but need to know more about how best to work with you.

As you put the information in the preceding pages to use, we want to leave you with one parting reminder: The drive to protect what we value is stronger than any other motive for getting involved. When the things and places we value are threatened, it can be hard to remember that our energy is best used not just to keep things good, but to make them better.

Appendix A

Smart Growth Contacts:

A listing of state and local groups working on more efficient land use and development in the US and Canada.

This is by no means an exhaustive listing—many more groups are involved in making their communities better places to live by promoting smarter growth. If you do not see a group in your area, or are having trouble finding one, please feel free to contact Smart Growth America at sga@smartgrowthamerica.org for further information.

Alaska

Anchorage Citizens' Coalition
PO Box 244265
Anchorage, AK 99501

British Columbia, Canada

Smart Growth BC
#201, 402 West Pender Street
Vancouver, BC V6B1T6
CANADA
Phone: 604.915.5234
Fax: 604.915.5236
Web: www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/

California

Greenbelt Alliance—Main office
631 Howard Street, Suite 510
San Francisco, CA 94105
Phone: 415.543.6771
Fax: 415.543.6781
info@greenbelt.org
Web: www.greenbelt.org

Colorado

Colorado Environmental Coalition
1536 Wynkoop St. #5C
Denver, CO 80203
Phone: 303-534-7066
gregg@cecenviro.org
Web: www.cecenviro.org

Environment Colorado— Denver Office

1536 Wynkoop St., First Floor
Denver, Co 80202
Phone: (303) 573-3871
Fax: (303) 573-3780
info@environmentcolorado.org

Environment Colorado— Colorado Springs Office

235 South Nevada
c/o Environment Colorado
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
Phone: (719) 471-0875
info@environmentcolorado.org

Livable Communities Support Center/Civic Results

1009 Grant St. Suite 203
Denver, CO 80203
Contact: Rich McClintock,
Program Director
Phone: 303-477-9985
rich@livablecenter.org
Web: www.livablecenter.org

Connecticut

Regional Plan Association— Connecticut Office

Two Landmark Square, Suite 108
Stamford, CT 06901
Phone: 203.356.0390
Fax: 203.356.0392
Web: www.rpa.org

Florida

1000 Friends of Florida
926 East Park Avenue
P.O. Box 5948
Tallahassee, FL 32314-5948
Phone: 850.222.6277
Fax: 850.222.1117
friends@1000fof.org
Web: www.1000fof.org

Georgia

The Georgia Conservancy— Main office

817 West Peachtree Street
Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30308
Phone: 404.876.2900
Fax: 404.872.9229
mail@gaconservancy.org

**The Georgia Conservancy—
Coastal Office:**
428 Bull Street
Savannah, GA 31401
Phone: 912.447.5910
Fax: 912.447.0704
tgccoast@bellsouth.net

**The Georgia Conservancy—
Columbus Office:**
P.O. Box 1246
Columbus, GA 31902
Phone: 706.718.6856
dmcdaniel@gaconservancy.org

**The Georgia Conservancy—
Southwest Georgia Office:**
18 North Main Street
Moultrie, GA 31768
Phone: 229.985.8117
gaconservancy@moultriega.net

Hawaii

Hawaii's Thousand Friends
305 Hahani Street PMB 282
Kailua, Hawai'i 96734
Phone and fax: (808) 262-0682
htf@lava.net
www.hawaii1000friends.org

Idaho

**Greater Yellowstone Coalition—
Idaho Office**
Idaho Director: Marv Hoyt
Assistant: Jen Woodie
162 N. Woodruff Avenue
Idaho Falls, ID 83401
Phone: (208) 522-7927
Fax: (208) 522-1048
mhoyt@greateryellowstone.org
www.greateryellowstone.org

Illinois

Campaign for Sensible Growth
25 East Washington, Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60602
Contact: Ellen Shubart, Campaign
Manager
Phone: (312) 863-6009
Fax: (312) 922-5619
eshubart@metroplanning.org

Chicago Metropolis 2020
30 West Monroe Street
Chicago, Illinois 60603
Phone: (312) 332-2020
Fax: 312-332-2626
Web: www.
chicagometropolis2020.org

Metropolitan Planning Council
25 E. Washington St.
Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60602
Phone: (312) 922-5616
Fax: (312) 922-5619
info@metroplanning.org
Web: www.metroplanning.org

**Center for Neighborhood
Technology**
2125 W North Ave
Chicago, IL 60647-5415
Phone: (773) 278-4800
Fax: (773) 278-3840
info@cnt.org
Web: www.cnt.org

Iowa

1000 Friends of Iowa
3524 6th Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50313
Phone: 515.288.5364
Fax: 515.288.6362
kfoi@kfoi.org
Web: www.kfoi.org

Maine

GrowSmart Maine
81 Bridge Street
Yarmouth, ME 04096
Contact: Alan Caron, President
Phone: 207-847-9275
acaron@growsmartmaine.org
Web: www.growsmartmaine.org

Massachusetts

Essex County Forum
45 Salem Road
Topsfield, MA 01983
Phone: 978-887-8876
Web: www.eccf.org

**Massachusetts Smart
Growth Alliance**
Contact: Kristina Egan, Director
Phone: 617-263-1257
kristina@ma-smartgrowth.org
Web: http://www.ma-
smartgrowth.org

Maryland

1000 Friends of Maryland
1209 N. Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
Phone: 410.385.2910
Fax: 410.385.2913
Web: www.friendsofmd.org

Coalition for Smarter Growth
4000 Albemarle Street, NW
Suite 310
Washington, DC 20016
Phone: (202) -244-4408
Fax: (202) -244-4438
email@smartergrowth.net
Web: www.smartergrowth.net

Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Philip Merrill
Environmental Center
6 Herndon Avenue
Annapolis, MD 21403
Phones: 410.268.8816
410.269.0481 (from Baltimore)
301.261.2350 (from D.C. metro)
chesapeake@cbf.org
Web: www.cbf.org

Michigan

Michigan Environmental Council
119 Pere Marquette Drive,
Suite 2A
Lansing, Michigan 48912
Phone: (517) 487-9539
Fax: (517) 487-9541
mec@voyager.net
Web: www.mecprotects.org

Michigan Land Use

Institute (MLUI)
205 S. Benzie Boulevard
P.O. Box 500,
Beulah, MI 49617
Phone: 231-882-4723
Fax: 231-882-7350
webinfo@mlui.org
Web: www.mlui.org

Michigan Suburbs Alliance
300 East Nine Mile Road
Ferndale, MI 48220
Phone: 248-546-2380
Fax: 248-546-2369
info@michigansuburbsalliance.org
www.michigansuburbsalliance.org

Minnesota

**1000 Friends of Minnesota–
St. Paul Office**
370 Selby Avenue, Suite 300
Saint Paul, MN 55102
Phone: 651.312.1000
Fax: 651.312.0012
info@1000fom.org
Web: www.1000fom.org

**1000 Friends of Minnesota–
Brainerd Office**
213 South 5th Street
Brainerd, MN 56401
Phone: 218.824.5095
Web: www.1000fom.org

Montana

**Greater Yellowstone Coalition–
Main Office**
13 S. Willson, Suite 2
P.O. Box 1874
Bozeman, MT 59771
Phone: (406) 586-1593
Fax: (406) 556-2839
gyc@greateryellowstone.org
www.greateryellowstone.org

Montana Smart Growth Coalition
PO Box 543
Helena, MT 59624
Phone: 406-449-6086
smartgrowth@mcn.net
Web: www.mtsmartgrowth.org

New Jersey

New Jersey Future
137 West Hanover Street
Trenton, NJ 08618
*Contacts: George S. Hawkins,
esq. (Executive Director) Susan
Burrows Farber (Deputy Director)*
Phone: 609-393-0008
Fax: 609-393-1189
njfuture@njfuture.org
Web: www.njfuture.org

**Regional Plan Association–
New Jersey Office**
94 Church Street, Suite 401
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901
Phone: 732.828.9945
Fax: 732.828.9949

New Mexico

**1000 Friends of New Mexico–
Albuquerque Office**
400 Gold Ave SW, Suite 910
Albuquerque NM 87102
Mailing Address:
P. O. Box 26176
Albuquerque NM 87125-6176
Phone: 505.848.8232
Fax: 505.248.1361
amigos@1000friends-nm.org
Web: www.1000friends-nm.org

**1000 Friends of New Mexico–
Santa Fe Office**
PO Box 2627
Santa Fe, NM 87504
Phone: 505.986.3831
Web: www.1000friends-nm.org

New York

**Regional Plan Association–
Main Office**
4 Irving Place, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10003
Phone: 212.253.2727
Fax: 212.253.5666

**WE ACT for Environmental
Justice, Inc.**
271 West 125th Street, Suite 308
New York, New York 10027-4424
Phone: (212) 961-1000
Fax: (212) 961-1015
Web: www.weact.org

North Carolina

**North Carolina Smart
Growth Alliance**
205 West Main Street, Suite 211
Carrboro, NC 27510
Phone: 919.928.8700
Fax: 919.928.8707
email@ncsmartgrowth.org
Web: www.ncsmartgrowth.org

Ohio

1000 Friends of Central Ohio
1000 E. Main St., Engine House #11
Columbus, OH 434205
Phone: (614) 507-6550
1000friendsohio@columbus.rr.com
Web: www.1kco.org

EcoCity Cleveland
3500 Lorain Avenue, Suite 301
Cleveland OH 44113
Phone: (216) 961-5020
Web: www.ecocitycleveland.org

Greater Ohio

846 1/2 E. Main St
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Appendix B

RESOURCES

General Resources

Smart Growth Shareware CD-ROM

Smart Growth America's Shareware CD-ROM is an extensive compilation of smart growth resources of every stripe, including presentations and speaking materials, fact sheets, publications, articles, toolkits, image galleries, and web links to over one hundred different resources. For the first time, citizens and communities can access the full spectrum of materials needed for making the case about smart growth in one place.


 You can request a copy of this tool online at www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

Pathways to Planning

Vermont Forum on Sprawl and the Orton Family Foundation

This sophisticated online tool acts as an interactive “consultant” to citizens and local planners regarding their town. The tool asks questions in a number of different areas and generates commentary, advice, and resources catered to the needs of the town. The aim is to help local groups address community issues, learn about sprawl and smart growth, and develop strategies for


action. In addition to a general section, the tool features eight areas including: Development Patterns, Transportation, Natural Resources, Public Access to Open Space, Agriculture, Town Centers, Historic Resources, and Housing.

 To access this free tool, see http://www.vtsprawl.org/Resources/onlinetool/onlinetool_main.htm

Community Rules: A New England Guide to Smart Growth

Vermont Forum on Sprawl and the Conservation Law Foundation


Community Rules is a guidebook for local planners, concerned citizens, and others who want to achieve smart growth in their communities through better planning, zoning, and permitting. The guidebook contains strategy tips for planning, regulation and public investment, and it is full of case-examples from all over New England.

 For a free electronic version of this publication, or to order a hard copy for \$15, please visit: <http://www.vtsprawl.org/Resources/publications/communityrulesmain.htm>

How To Win Land Development Issues

Community and Environmental Defense Services

This book is a remarkably detailed, step-by-step guide intended to walk community members through the process of advocating for, and attaining, better land use and planning for their communities. It is the author's hope that in the end you will have the ability to: 1) look at your neighborhood and envision various possible growth scenarios, 2) assess how each might affect quality of life for you and your neighbors, 3) identify solutions for each negative impact as well as opportunities to enhance quality of life, then 4) organize your neighbors so you can win the support of those who will decide how this growth is managed. The book also includes such useful information as how to lobby key decision makers, what the growth management process usually entails, how to gain public support, how to negotiate, and so much more.

 For the full online version of this book, please see: <http://www.ceds.org/publications.html> (no hard copies are available).

Community Design Projects

Envision Utah

In the fall of 1999, Envision Utah and the Utah Quality Growth Commission selected eight cities in the Greater Wasatch Area to host site-specific Community Design Workshops. The purpose was to discuss how Envision Utah's growth strategies could be applied to development sites in these other communities. The cities met with key stakeholders to discuss how quality growth principles could work on given sites. The resulting illustrations, posted on Envision Utah's website, provide excellent examples of what thoughtful planning solutions actually LOOK like.

🔗 To see these illustrations, visit: <http://www.envisionutah.org/index.php?id=NDc1>

Smart Growth Tools for Main Street *National Trust for Historic Preservation*

This tool kit offers information on several progressive smart growth tools that communities around the country are using to combat sprawl while preserving the uniqueness and economic health of their towns. It includes sections on: local preservation ordinances, using planning & zoning tools to promote smart growth and discourage sprawl, how local citizens can influence transportation projects in their communities, the use of size limits on retail stores to avoid loss of economic vitality, new building codes designed to encourage the rehabilitation

of historic buildings, encouraging state agencies to locate downtown, temporary development controls, and understanding property rights.

🔗 To access this comprehensive toolkit for community members, please see: <http://nationaltrust.org/issues/smartgrowth/toolkit/index.html>

Public Involvement Resources:

National Charrette Institute

The NCI aids in the creation of healthy, livable communities by supporting civic involvement during the planning process. The Institute itself provides training for planners, developers, town council members, and others interested in organizing charrettes for their communities. In addition, the Institute provides a "start-up kit."

🔗 To download the start-up kit, or to inquire about training, please see the Institute's website: <http://www.charretteinstitute.org>.

Neighborhood Charrette Handbook

This detailed document, put together by James Segedy and Bradley Johnson, explains the ins and outs of charrettes, community-wide planning processes in which everyone can have a say in the community's future. The handbook explains not only what charrettes are and how they work, but also offers step by step instructions on holding one in

your own community. You can find the handbook at <http://www.louisville.edu/org/sun/planning/char.html>.

PlaceMatters.com

This website provides a set of tools and techniques for planners, community leaders, and public agencies looking for land use and growth management solutions. It includes not only the tools and how to use them, but also information on place-based planning, as well as various case studies.

🔗 You can find it at <http://www.placematters.com>.

Environmental Issues: **Local Greenprinting for Growth** *Trust for Public Land and National Association of Counties*

This workbook series is a guide for communities seeking to create a greenprint conservation program. Its four volumes describe how communities can preserve the character of their communities through land conservation, secure conservation funds, and manage park and conservation land.

🔗 You can access it at www.

Protecting Water Resources with Smart Growth

US Environmental Protection Agency

This document is intended for communities, local governments, and state and regional planners who are

already broadly familiar with smart growth and are seeking specific policies and tools to protect their water resources. The report presents 75 innovative approaches such as redeveloping abandoned properties, encouraging rooftop gardens, allowing shared parking, and promoting tree planting.

🔗 You can download this publication at <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/publications.htm>.

Community Design: Project for Public Spaces

This website provides users tools and services for anyone looking to understand what makes great places. PPS's extremely helpful book, *How to Turn a Place Around: A handbook for creating successful public spaces*, is available at:

🔗 [http:// www.pps.org/info/products/Books_Videos/httapa](http://www.pps.org/info/products/Books_Videos/httapa) .

Affordable Housing Design Advisor

This helpful tool shows how to make affordable housing look like market-rate housing, with practical steps and a gallery to help make thoughtful design decisions.

🔗 To access it, see: <http://www.designadvisor.org/>

Transportation and Transit: Ten Principles for Successful Development Around Transit

Urban Land Institute (2003)

This booklet can help you understand how to successfully implement development-- a mix of housing, offices, and commercial spaces--around underutilized transit centers, such as bus and rail stations.

🔗 To download a copy, please see <http://www.uli.org>.

Pedestrian and Transit Friendly Design: A Primer for Smart Growth

International City/County Management Association (1999)

This primer, based on a manual prepared for the Florida Department of Transportation, illustrates pedestrian- and transit-friendly designs for community seeking to implement those.

🔗 To download this free primer, see www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/ptfd_primer.pdf.

Appendix C

Glossary of Terms

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

A second dwelling attached to or separate from the main single family residence, such as a garage or basement apartment. This apartment or cottage may house one or more persons who may or may not be a member of the family. ADU's are often referred to by other names as well such as "mother-in-law Apartment" or "granny flat."

Brownfield

A former industrial site, often with environmental contamination, that is in a promising location for reclamation and redevelopment as a mixed use or residential area. (As distinct from "greenfield". See below.)

Complete neighborhood

A complete neighborhood is one which includes residential, commercial, and civic areas within easy access of each other—preferably all within walking distance.

Complete street

A planning and design term for streets that offer safe, comfortable and convenient options to walk, drive, bicycle or take public transportation. Many jurisdictions are adopting policies to create complete, rather than car-only, streets whenever they build, overhaul or upgrade roads.

Density

In the field of urban planning, density usually refers to the number of units of housing, office space, or commercial space per unit of area. Higher density development, especially when accomplished attractively and near transit, is an important component of successful smart growth.

Developer

A developer is any person who is improving or reconfiguring a parcel of land within a city, and who may or may not be the owner of that property. Most people use the term "developer" to refer to a privately funded person or corporation that seeks to build upon, or otherwise make changes to, a parcel of land, in order to sell and profit from that property.

Development Fees

Fees charged to developers or builders as a prerequisite to permit approval. The most common are: (1) impact fees (such as parkland acquisition fees, school facilities fees, or street construction fees) related to funding public improvements which are necessitated in part or in whole by the development; (2) connection fees (such as water line fees) to cover the cost of installing public services to the development; (3) permit fees (such as building permits, grading permits, sign permits) for the administrative costs of processing

development plans; and, (4) application fees (rezoning, CUP, variance, etc.) for the administrative costs of reviewing and hearing development proposals.

Downzone

This term refers to the rezoning of land to a more restrictive or less intensive zone (for example, from multi-family residential to single-family residential or from residential to agricultural).

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

Floor Area Ratio, or FAR, is a measure of development intensity. FAR is the ratio of the amount of floor area of a building to the amount of area of its site. For instance, a one-story building that covers an entire lot has an FAR of 1. Similarly, a one-story building that covers 1/2 of a lot has an FAR of 0.5.

Greenfield development

Development that occurs on previously undeveloped farm, forest or other open land.

Impact fees

See "development fees".

Impervious surface

Hard surfaces, such as rooftops, sidewalks, roads, and parking lots, that are covered by impenetrable materials like asphalt,

concrete, brick, and stone. These materials seal surfaces, repel water and prevent precipitation from infiltrating soils, and therefore from being filtered back into groundwater.

Infill

The practice of re-developing vacant, abandoned, or empty lots of land in otherwise developed areas. For example, a small-scale, open parking lot located between two modern office buildings might be transformed into a mixed-use apartment and retail building that better fits the neighborhood.

New Urbanism

According to the Congress for the New Urbanism, this is the process of reintegrating the components of modern life—housing, workplace, shopping, and recreation—into compact, mixed-use neighborhoods linked by transit and set in a larger regional open space framework. These principles can be applied successfully to infill and redevelopment sites within existing urbanized areas, or to new developments in the suburbs.

Overlay Zone

A set of zoning requirements that is superimposed upon a base zone. Overlay zones are generally used when a particular area requires special protection (as in a historic preservation district) or has a special problem (such as steep slopes, flooding or earthquake faults). Development of land subject to overlay zoning requires compliance with the regulations of both the base and overlay zones.

Planned Unit Development (PUD)

Land use zoning which allows the adoption of a set of development standards that are specific to the particular project being proposed. Typically PUDs involve a mixture of different land uses and thus flexibility is needed from the rigid standards of the zoning code. PUD zones usually do not contain detailed development standards; these are established during the process of considering the proposals and adopted by ordinance if the project is approved.

Purchase of development rights (PDR)

PDR is a public program that pays landowners the fair market value of their development rights, in exchange for a permanent conservation easement that restricts development of the property. PDR programs are strictly voluntary and are usually funded by the sale of bonds or tax revenue.

Setback

A minimum distance required by zoning to be maintained between two structures or between a structure and property lines. Transfer of development rights (TDR) This is a legal covenant that protects a parcel of land in perpetuity from development and grants enforcement of the covenant to the county.

Traditional neighborhood development (TND)

This is a compact, mixed-use neighborhood where residential, civic, and commercial buildings are all in close proximity to one another. It is

characterized by human scale design, a concern for walkability, increased density, and may exhibit the following tell-tale characteristics: alleys, grid street pattern, buildings oriented to the street, front porches on houses, and village squares, among others. Examples of TND include the Kentlands in Maryland and I'On, in South Carolina.

Transit-oriented development (TOD)

TOD refers to moderate to high density housing concentrated in mixed use developments situated to encourage the use of public transit. Typically, they are located on top of, or very near, public transit access points, where residents can easily and conveniently walk or bike to transit that will carry them to their final destinations.

Variance

A variance provides the property owner a means to deviate from the standard rules to mitigate any “unnecessary hardship” caused by complying with the zoning code. Variance requests are subject to public hearing, usually before a zoning administrator or board of zoning adjustment. Variances do not allow a change in land use, usually just the intensity of use.

Watershed

A watershed is all of the land area which drains into a given body of water. For example, a parcel of land would be within the Chesapeake Bay watershed if rain falling on the parcel eventually made it from there into the Chesapeake Bay.

Appendix D

Technology for community design and decision-making

By Ken Snyder, *Placematters.com*

For the past 60 years, planning and zoning rules have been used mostly to prevent what communities don't want, rather than to shape growth so that it fulfills a vision. One reason is that rules usually appear as a reaction to someone's terrible mistake. Another, though, is that until relatively recently it could be difficult to envision and predict how plans and designs might look when fulfilled. That's beginning to change thanks to new technologies that bring information to our fingertips and that make it easier to engage ordinary citizens. Communities now have more options available than ever to improve the *way* planning decisions are made and the *quality* of those decisions.

Choosing the Right Tools

Tools and techniques for community design and decision making fall into five categories of decision support that reflect the critical phases of a sustainable community development process.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)/ Land Use Spatial Analysis Tools. GIS are information management systems tied to geographic data. These tools allow you to create instant maps showing a combination of features you choose. The maps draw from an integrated database of features such as road networks, urban mapping, land cover, hydrology and demographic information. Most

large jurisdictions and metro planning agencies now have these systems established.

GIS can simulate how the natural and built environments, plus the social and economic systems of a community, relate to each other on different scales and at different times. GIS-generated maps and charts can also help non-technical community members visualize land uses, environmental hazards, and transportation access and other relevant information.

For example, when redeveloping a brownfield in the Baltimore region, a GIS analysis was used to identify and create maps of potential developable areas within the five counties and city of the Baltimore region. These sites were then put on a map with the region's projected growth needs. Planning workshops were conducted so stakeholders could distribute projected development on these maps at various densities, enabling the participants to clearly see the relationships between development pressures and open space protection, density thresholds needed to support public transportation, and regional sustainability.

Impact Analysis Tools, many of which are GIS based, assess the past, present and future economic and environmental impacts for a wide range of development projects and policies. By providing both quantitative and visual outputs for a variety of scenarios, impact analysis tools make it easy for planners and the public to understand the trade-offs between alternative development approaches

and public policy decisions. When, for example, a community is addressing land use and transportation issues, they can use tools that analyze place-based data about the unique demographics, land use, block layout, air quality, transit use and environmental issues of their particular place. Using the EPA Smart Growth Index Model, the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) in Delaware demonstrated how transit oriented redevelopment and transportation enhancements can reduce congestion, improve air quality, and increase the usability of transit and non-motorized travel modes in an established, older suburb of Wilmington.

Community Process Tools allow greater numbers of people to be involved in a more effective and efficient process.

Websites can provide an opportunity for hosting meetings and sharing documents, calendars and important event information. Electronic meeting systems using technologies such as keypad voting can facilitate very effective large scale meetings, while Internet resources such as websites and databases can help communities gather and share important data and information to promote better communication.

Recently, the Mayor's office in Denver, CO used keypad technology to facilitate discussions and allow for real-time data gathering and feedback on how the city can achieve their established goals. A series of neighborhood meetings were held to engage local citizens in a discussion about Denver's future, gather public feedback on desired results for the next four years, and generate specific ideas on how the city should prioritize its 2005 budget.

Visualization Tools can play an important role in both the process and design phases of a planning project. These tools allow citizens to experience different alternatives that are difficult or impossible to see in raw data form. Visualization tools take advantage of the human capacity to process visual information quickly and efficiently so they help citizens make informed decisions about what is best for the future of their neighborhood, city and region. Because visualization tools are very compelling and even fun to look at (they can be presented in two or three-dimensions), they can be used to draw people into a planning process while also providing immediate feedback on the quality and appeal of different design choices.

With visualization tools, discussions move away from the abstract, where everyone might have a different notion about what could happen, to the concrete, where everyone is responding to the same realistic image of possible futures. The visual preference survey is a commonly used technique to test a specific design concept with citizens and to get feedback on specific planning and design alternatives. Participants express their reactions to a number of images that display all manner of community design elements and characteristics. Other visualization techniques involve computer imaging using realistic 3-dimensional designs and software that allows users to "paint" their own changes to an image during public meetings.

 **For more information about specific tools and techniques visit the PlaceMatters.com tools database at <http://www.placematterstools.org>.**

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