

Definition of Smart Growth

Smart Growth is not a single tool, but a set of cohesive urban and regional planning principles that can be blended together and melded with unique local and regional conditions to achieve a better development pattern. Smart Growth is an approach to achieving communities that are socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable. Smart Growth provides choices — in housing, in transportation, in jobs, and in amenities (including cultural, social services, recreational, educational, among others) — using comprehensive planning to guide, design, develop, manage, revitalize, and build inclusive communities and regions to:

- have a unique sense of community and place;
- preserve and enhance valuable natural and cultural resources;
- equitably distribute the costs and benefits of land development, considering both participants and the short- and long-term time scale;
- create and/or enhance economic value;
- expand the range of transportation, employment, and housing choices in a fiscally responsible manner;
- balance long-range, regional considerations of sustainability with short-term incremental geographically isolated actions;
- promote public health and healthy communities;
- apply up-to-date local and regional performance measures of successful urban and regional growth;
- encourage compact, transit-accessible (where available), pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development patterns and land reuse; and,
- increase collaboration and partnerships to advance place-based and regional goals and objectives, while respecting local land-use preferences and priorities.

Core Principles of Smart Growth

- Efficient use of land and infrastructure
- Creation and/or enhancement of economic value
- A greater mix of uses and housing choices
- Neighborhoods and communities focused around human-scale, mixed-use centers
- A balanced, multi-modal transportation system providing increased transportation choice
- Conservation and enhancement of environmental and cultural resources
- Preservation or creation of a sense of place
- Increased citizen participation in all aspects of the planning process and at every level of government
- Vibrant center city life
- Vital small towns and rural areas
- A multi-disciplinary and inclusionary process to accomplish smart growth
- Planning processes and regulations at multiple levels that promote diversity and equity
- Regional view of community, economy and ecological sustainability
- Recognition that institutions, governments, businesses and individuals require a concept of cooperation to support smart growth
- Local, state, and federal policies and programs that support urban investment, compact development and land conservation
- Well defined community edges, such as agricultural greenbelts, wildlife corridors or greenways permanently preserved as farmland or open space

Policy Outcomes

- Economic benefits
- Planning structure and process
- Transportation and land use
- Fiscal responsibility
- Social equity and community building
- Farmland protection and land conservation
- Public health