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APA Policy Guide on Smart Growth

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Updated Guide Adopted by Chapter Delegate Assembly, April 14, 2012

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Declarations

The American Planning Association¹ supports the development of mixed use, mixed income livable communities where people choose to live, work, and play because they are attractive and economical options rather than forced decisions. The American Planning Association identifies Smart Growth as that which supports choice and opportunity by promoting efficient and sustainable land development, incorporates redevelopment patterns that optimize prior infrastructure investments, and consumes less land that is otherwise available for agriculture, open space, natural systems, and rural lifestyles. Supporting the right of Americans to choose where and how they live, work, and play enables economic freedom for all Americans. The declarations below support that goal.

Providing choices does not mean a dichotomy between large suburban homes and dense urban high-rise structures. Smart growth is about tailoring choices for individual settings; it may well mean offering smaller detached homes on smaller lots within walking distance of schools and amenities. Smart Growth is largely about retrofitting communities to offer more choices both in terms of housing types and prices but also in terms of transportation options. This approach to growth and planning can not only deliver dynamic attractive communities with greater choices for consumers but can be a powerful tool for farmland, open space and habitat preservation.

A. ECONOMIC BENEFITS

1. The American Planning Association affirms that applying principles of Smart Growth provides definite economic benefits — for individuals, for neighborhoods, for communities, for developers, for land owners, and for the economy as a whole.
2. The American Planning Association supports incentives targeted at restoring and expanding vibrancy to the nation's urban centers and core downtowns as an engine for job growth and economic vitality.
3. The American Planning Association recognizes that maintaining, expanding, and optimizing the use of existing or prior public infrastructure

efficient use of limited public resources and helps to preserve the natural environment. It strengthens small cities, towns, and rural centers in ways that provide greater housing and opportunity while preserving agricultural-based economies, and cultural and natural resources,

recognizes the tremendous economic growth potential present by retrofitting existing suburban efficient development patterns that allow for a wider variety of economic opportunity, access,

ACCESS

on inclusive citizen participation in all levels of planning as a means to accommodate diversity

It effective comprehensive planning is the primary means of implementing policies that ; stimulate redevelopment opportunities, optimize prior infrastructure investments, protect

- private property rights, and support local choice.
3. The American Planning Association, recognizing there is no universal approach to Smart Growth, supports the coordination of plans, policies, and services across jurisdictions and levels of government to help support and reinforce Smart Growth approaches that fit local, regional, and statewide contexts.
 4. The American Planning Association supports planning for Smart Growth that includes the following elements: economic development, energy, hazard mitigation, historic and cultural preservation, housing, infrastructure, land use, natural resources and ecological systems, public educational and other community facilities, public services, public health, resiliency and transportation.
 5. The American Planning Association supports legislation that promotes the actions of local government including, but not limited to, zoning and other land use regulations, as well as the provision of infrastructure to be consistent with and to implement the community's adopted comprehensive plan.
 6. The American Planning Association supports legislation at the state level that provides incentives for adoption of a clearly defined comprehensive plan and capital improvements plan prior to the imposition of land use regulations and controls at the local and regional level.
 7. The American Planning Association supports policies that encourage and create incentives for land redevelopment and urban infill development, along with requirements that growth and development be coordinated and concurrent with the provision of infrastructure capacity and services.
 8. The American Planning Association supports regulatory processes that facilitate, encourage, and support Smart Growth while eliminating regulatory barriers that increase the costs of Smart Growth.
 9. The American Planning Association supports requiring federal agencies to include the effect of federal actions on development growth and land patterns in their analyses of environmental impacts and to actively support state and local plans for growth management.
 10. The American Planning Association supports the coordination and cooperation of local planning efforts within a region to achieve desired outcomes at the regional scale based on shared values, economic and natural assets, and the cultural identity of communities within a region.

C. TRANSPORTATION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

1. The American Planning Association encourages planning and funding policies supporting Smart Growth that provide economically efficient land use and transportation choices at the local and regional levels that help to increase the share of non-automotive travel while recognizing the continued importance of automotive/truck mobility for people and goods.
2. The American Planning Association supports the role Smart Growth can play to increase transportation choice, mobility, and access to and from work, home, school, and services.
3. The American Planning Association supports a balanced, multi-modal transportation network — both new and existing — that includes adequate, convenient, and safe access for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation.
4. The American Planning Association supports enhanced research into and development of realistic parking standards or guidelines — considering both minimum and maximum thresholds — for land development projects using Smart Growth principles. Parking regulations require local solutions based on community-wide parking studies and approaches.
5. The American Planning Association supports the development and implementation of coordinated regional and statewide multimodal transportation plans linked to planned land uses and strategic economic assets.
6. The American Planning Association supports federal and state incentives and local initiatives that encourage locating new development, especially the development of public facilities, in areas that are supported by a balanced transportation network that provides a variety of transportation choices and supports more active, healthy lifestyles for people of all ages and abilities.
7. The American Planning Association supports changes to roadway design standards that promote and support the use of transit and non-motorized transportation modes, including walking and biking, especially to accommodate and promote the implementation of "Complete Streets" policies and plans.
8. The American Planning Association supports policies and plans that place street, sidewalk, bike, and other pathway interconnectivity as a high priority in the development of transportation systems and land-use development policies, plans, and projects.
9. The American Planning Association supports transportation infrastructure design that reduces stormwater runoff through Low Impact Design and Green Infrastructure concepts and techniques.
10. The American Planning Association supports policies and plans that place high priority on integrating affordable housing into Transit Oriented Developments, as well as throughout the region and within each city in order to achieve transportation goals.
11. The American Planning Association supports the incorporation of permanent land preservation in plans for rural areas as a means of shaping compact, efficient urban areas as well as protecting wildlife habitat, farmland, and other critical open spaces resources in perpetuity.
12. The American Planning Association supports policies and plans that recognize the importance of the form that creates a complimentary relationship between land use and transportation facilities supporting smart growth principles.

D. FISCAL EFFICIENCY

1. The American Planning Association supports a flexible approach to accomplishing Smart Growth because its principles can be applied to communities of all sizes, situations, and locations, and one approach does not fit all.
2. The American Planning Association supports growth and fiscal policies that prioritize the use of existing infrastructure capacity over public construction of new infrastructure, including the requirement that new development either pay for the services it requires or be consciously subsidized.
3. The American Planning Association supports establishing infrastructure extension policies that support and preserve rural communities and rural landscapes.
4. The American Planning Association supports strengthening, modernizing, and building professional capacity of state, metropolitan, and regional public-agency institutions and public-private or nonprofit organizations to facilitate fiscally responsible decision making and problem solving, while respecting local governmental decision making.
5. The American Planning Association supports a strong role of regional organizations in planning for land conservation, water resource protection, cultural resource preservation, transportation system development, preservation of open space corridors and native landscapes,

and disaster mitigation, where economies of scale can provide a more fiscally efficient process that achieves desired outcomes.

6. The American Planning Association supports fiscal and budgetary policies that encourage smart growth planning.

E. SOCIAL EQUITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

1. The American Planning Association supports a sustained and focused initiative in federal, state, and local public policy to reverse the general decline of neighborhoods through strategies that promote citizen involvement and reinvestment within core communities.
2. The American Planning Association supports the application of smart growth principles to expand social equity in rural communities in ways that help preserve and strengthen their character.
3. The American Planning Association supports increased social, economic, and racial equity in our communities and calls on the federal government to increase community development funds to remedy these inequities and to ensure that planning and land development decisions do not unfairly burden economically disadvantaged groups.
4. The American Planning Association supports federal, state, and local policies and programs that encourage economically and socially diverse mixed income neighborhoods as the foundation for healthy regions, including encouragement for the provision of workforce housing in all new-growth areas and areas to be redeveloped.
5. The American Planning Association supports efforts to strengthen public education systems, including pre-K, as essential components of community building in urban, suburban, and rural areas, which help to ensure that children have an opportunity for an excellent education wherever they may live, and which provide a critical element for reinvestment in urban core communities.
6. The American Planning Association supports planning that identifies the transportation, housing, employment, education, recreation and health needs of our changing population, both with respect to the total number of people expected to reside in an area and also with respect to population groups with special needs such as the elderly, school children, or people of diverse cultures.
7. The American Planning Association supports public-private partnerships as a means to leverage funds to achieve social equity and community redevelopment.

F. FARMLAND PROTECTION AND LAND CONSERVATION

1. The American Planning Association supports the use of Smart Growth principles to aid land and water conservation, including farmland preservation, soil and wetlands conservation, and brownfield remediation and redevelopment.

G. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

1. The American Planning Association affirms that applying Smart Growth principles across urban and rural areas will have significant and positive impacts on quality of life. This quality is measured by the most valued human asset: our health.
2. The American Planning Association declares that chronic health conditions, food deserts, a lack of accessibility to services and recreational opportunities, and barriers to making physical activity a part of daily life are unsustainable emerging trends that Smart Growth principles can alleviate. The way a community is planned — its land development patterns, transportation options, or community design — bears heavily on the health of those living there.
3. The American Planning Association supports policies and strategies that preserve existing agricultural land and expand new opportunities for local and regional food systems and urban agriculture.
4. The American Planning Association supports federal, state, and local policies and programs that encourage the siting and design of new smart growth development in such a manner that current and future hazards are avoided or mitigated.
5. The American Planning Association supports policies and plans promoting networks, parks, trails, and open space that improve connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists and create opportunities for healthy lifestyles.

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 include:

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

Benefits of Smart Growth

While many Americans have benefited from decades of post-World War II suburbanization, many have not. It is also a development pattern that has led to some negative consequences for the community as a whole. Our nation is now experiencing heightened concern over the social, environmental, and fiscal quality of our communities arising from development practices that aggravate the decline of many urban communities and older suburbs, congest streets and highways, demand higher levels of energy consumption, accelerate the loss of natural resources and deteriorate the natural environment, and limit opportunities for the retention and creation of affordable housing. Often these problems are simply and collectively labeled, "sprawl." In response, the Smart Growth movement emerged.

Smart Growth is not, however, limited to combating the symptoms of sprawl. Rural communities are as essential as urban areas to our national economic health and well-being. Smart Growth principles are applicable to rural America as well as urban and suburban communities. Smart Growth is just as much about making existing suburban communities more walkable, efficient, and inviting as it is about preserving rural farmland or reinvigorating urban cores. Traditional approaches to both urban and suburban development both have shortcomings that can be addressed by Smart Growth.

At its core, Smart Growth provides choices for all Americans. American society is not monocultural and never was. The "American Dream" is not a single dream shared by all, but a common concept of realizing economic opportunity through upward mobility, with different dreams for different people. Smart Growth facilitates the opportunity for each individual and family to pursue and realize an "American Dream" of one's own choosing, expanding housing and transportation choices that enable greater economic freedom. As much as Smart Growth facilitates various new "American Dreams," it does not take away anything from anyone that they do not choose to leave behind.

Infill development and redevelopment, increased density of development, and the adaptive re-use of existing buildings result in efficient utilization of land resources, more compact urban areas, and more efficient delivery of quality public services. Efficient use of public and private infrastructure starts with creating neighborhoods that maximize the use of existing infrastructure. Special consideration should be given to the location and timing of infrastructure extensions in rural areas so as not to encourage growth that will promote inefficient and unsustainable development patterns; create the need for additional inefficient and costly infrastructure; result in the loss of viable agriculture, forest land, and important natural habitat; create conflicts between agricultural and urban land uses; or ultimately harm the character of the rural community. Smart Growth principles have an economic benefit to the communities and regions that employ them.

Mixed-use developments include quality housing, varied by type and price, integrated with shopping, schools, community facilities, and jobs. Human-scale design in harmony with the existing urban form and quality construction contribute to successful compact, mixed-use development and also promote privacy, safety, visual appeal, and compatibility among uses and users. In rural areas, a mix of housing types and price ranges should be encouraged to meet the needs of the entire community. Mixed-use development is not limited to vertical mixed-use structures; locating parks, neighborhood retail and services, schools, and housing all within walking distance is another way to create a mixed-use community.

A sense of place results when design and development protect and incorporate the distinctive character of a community and its unique context, whether urban or rural. Geography, natural features, climate, culture, historical resources, and ecology each contribute to the distinctive character of a region. Smart

Growth principles contribute to a sense of place that differs from the "Everywhere USA" model and anonymous architecture that dominated the last quarter of the 20th century and first decade of the 21st.

Integrating land use and transportation planning to accommodate more than just the automobile and to provide increased transportation choices, including mass transit, bicycling, and walking is a hallmark of Smart Growth. Such development is pedestrian-friendly at a human scale. Rural residents, who range in age and abilities, also have needs for access to public transportation. All forms of transportation must be reliable, efficient, and user-friendly, creating opportunities for access by all segments of the population to housing, employment, education, recreation, and human and community services.

The American Planning Association recognizes that the efficient development of small towns and rural areas is critical to their long-term survival and sustainability. The preservation of smaller towns and rural areas in light of development pressures caused by sprawling development patterns is often more economically efficient. Making housing choices available to a range of households, ages, and incomes, all while maintaining the character of the community and the quality of life is important to new and existing residents alike. The high cost of providing basic infrastructure and services in rural communities demands efficient use of existing facilities, compact development as well as land conservation.

All planning processes, as well as the distribution of resources, must be equitable. A diversity of voices must be included in community planning and implementation. Citizen participation helps ensure that planning outcomes are equitable and based on decision making that derives from an inclusive process. Planning processes must involve comprehensive strategies that engage meaningful citizen participation and find common ground for decision making. Appropriate citizen participation requires an open process by which all stakeholders are free to participate regardless of their position on planning policies or their socio-economic status.

Smart Growth includes evaluating the appropriate geographies to improve air quality, water quality and quantity, habitat functionality, economic prosperity, and transportation choices; and for local jurisdictions within these geographies to establish and coordinate policies that address these elements in a manner that is appropriate for their regions and governance structures.

Smart Growth does not work without cooperation and partnerships among governments, property owners, developers, financial institutions, and the public. The principles of Smart Growth can form the basis for dialogue between these parties and challenge all to ensure that we create in America communities of lasting value. Smart Growth provides timely tools not only for long-range planning but also addressing current issues related to communities with high foreclosure rates, limited infrastructure, and fiscal challenges.

Policy Outcomes

This section summarizes the American Planning Association's desired results from the implementation of these policy declarations.

A. ECONOMIC BENEFITS:

- Reduced cost of water purification and environmental remediation, improved air and water quality, and the preservation of natural areas and wildlife habitat
- Reduced costs of disaster cleanup and long-term environmental mitigation resulting from the provision of interconnected networks of natural lands, natural areas and wildlife habitat, and waterways)
- Additional protection of homeowner investments in their homes from encroachments of incompatible land uses and the provision of recreation and open space amenities through greenways or green infrastructure improvements
- Increased opportunity for homeownership through increased housing choice, including traditional single-family homes, smaller homes on small lots, row-houses, condos, and housing within mixed-use structures
- Reduced costs of housing and travel and, as a result, increased local consumer spending that results from improvements in transportation modes and linkages between them and with land uses
- Increased access to jobs and education to improve the community tax and employment base through greater investment and purchasing power
- Improved energy efficiency through building design, site planning, land use planning and transportation choice that reduce dependence on imported oil, conserve energy and improve economic security
- Choices available for living, working, shopping, and playing lead to economically resilient communities with active citizen participation and engagement

B. PLANNING STRUCTURE AND PROCESS:

- Proactive planning that encourages regional cooperation, collaborative citizen participation in public life, diverse neighborhoods, the equitable distribution of resources, and shared fiscal responsibility
- Well-designed, enduring communities that are economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable in the near and the long term

- Improved communication and collaboration among various levels of government, citizens, developers, and other interested parties to improve efficiency and build better communities
- Discouraging low-density sprawl and a reversal in the dispersion of housing and jobs into single-use, land-consumptive automobile-dependent development patterns around urban areas and rural communities
- Growth in areas that can provide infrastructure and services in support of growth, encouraged by intelligent land use planning that makes efficient use of existing infrastructure while conserving agricultural and other rural production areas, as well as cultural and visitor destinations
- Federal and state support, in terms of policy and incentives, for local decision-making processes, including comprehensive planning
- Encouraging development decisions that are predictable, fair, and fiscally responsible by official adoption of Smart Growth Policies and plans
- Available case studies and best practices that help to coordinate regional, state, and federal data and approaches on advanced planning, geographic information, and measuring performance to guide decision makers and inform the public

C. TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE:

- Reduction in vehicle miles travelled (VMT) by land use patterns that enable a reduction in the need for automobile travel for all trip purposes, and through increased travel by bus, fixed-rail systems, and ferries, and walking and bicycling in existing settlements and new urban-growth areas
- Increase in travel mode share for all alternative modes, including bus, fixed-rail systems, ferries, walking, and bicycling, for all trip purposes (commuting and non-commuting)
- Communities, neighborhoods and transportation facilities that are safe, accessible, and inviting to pedestrians and bicyclists

D. FISCAL EFFICIENCY:

- Reduced fiscal burden on local and state governments and their taxpayers caused by the costs for financing and maintaining ever-increasing infrastructure deficits or shortfalls
- Improved long-term fiscal viability of regions and their constituent local governments
- Reordering of infrastructure planning and development from fragmented and uncoordinated patterns while protecting rural areas from potentially damaging infrastructure location and extension policies

E. SOCIAL EQUITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING:

- Vibrant central cities that have experienced a cycle of renewal and rebirth, whose neighborhoods accommodate a diversity of people with a range of backgrounds, economic capacity, and family structures
- Reversal in the centralization of poverty in communities both urban and rural
- Elimination of regulatory barriers that impede construction of affordable housing
- Improved accessibility for economic opportunity in rural areas
- Decreased racial and economic segregation through regulations requiring affordable housing in all new-growth areas and areas to be redeveloped
- Investment whereby disadvantaged residents benefit from community reinvestment activities, including in the resulting housing and neighborhood conditions of housing affordability; educational, employment, and recreational opportunities; and transportation, health care, fresh food, and service accessibility

F. FARMLAND PROTECTION AND LAND CONSERVATION:

- Slowing the conversion of agricultural and non-urbanized rural landscapes to suburban single-use developments without adequate urban services
- Promoting access to fresh, affordable, and healthy foods for all residents, including those in disadvantaged communities
- Development and implementation of food security planning that will enable the nation to be self-sufficient in feeding our population for an extended period of time if natural or man-made disaster or international conditions so dictate

G. PUBLIC HEALTH:

- Providing national guidance for sustainable, mixed-use communities designed around mass transit, walking and cycling have been shown to reduce lung and heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and other chronic health conditions
- Preservation of existing and support new opportunities for local and regional urban and rural agriculture
- Improved connections between destinations and providing a wide range of active transportation choices, such as transit, trails, and pedestrian and biking facilities
- A balanced transportation system that makes it possible for residents to walk or ride a bicycle to a store, school or work
- Compact neighborhoods with a mix of uses that make it easy for residents to walk or bicycle to a store, school or work. Leaders ensure that public health issues are a guiding consideration in land-use planning decisions.

- Adoption of Healthy School Sites, Facilities, and Policies. Where schools are located plays a large part in whether or not children can walk or bike to them. Schools that are located in the heart of a neighborhood are more easily reached by children without automobiles. School curricula and policies in support of active living can foster daily opportunities for physical activity.
- Neighborhood parks that are within walking and biking distance of a person's home or work to encourage greater physical activity, including shared-use paths (or trails) that link homes, work, commercial centers, public transit, and community facilities
- State and local officials leveraging, securing, and dedicating funding for active living.

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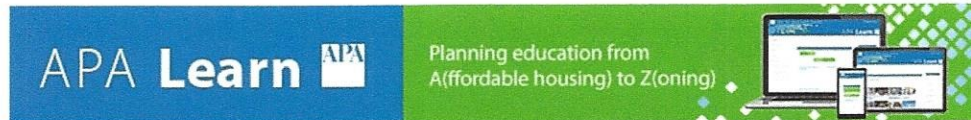
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ENDNOTE

1. The American Planning Association comprises 47 chapters representing states and regions, 19 divisions covering special interest areas and populations, students in collegiate schools of planning, and its professional development arm, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).



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