

A Requiem for Smart Growth?

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Introduction

In the days following the 2004 presidential election there was much consternation in Democratic circles. George Bush won again; the Republicans picked up seats in the House and Senate; and the Republican majority seemed to have grown in depth and strength. Pundits and progressives were already wondering--could the Democrats ever recapture the hearts of an American public now apparently obsessed with security, morality, and personal charm.

Among academic and professional planners there was similar concern. Although John Kerry had never been a champion of smart growth, it was clear that the prospects for smarter growth were far greater in an administration headed by Kerry than one headed by Bush. Smart growth had not fully disappeared in the federal agenda in the first Bush administration, but the momentum had clearly waned. Further, the discussion in the planning chat-rooms and list serves focused on the blue and red maps, which made clear that Republicans dominated not only the central and southern states but also the rural and suburban areas of most every state in the union. The subject line of one long conversation on the PLANET list serve was "sprawling Republicans" which conveyed the alarm: the new American majority was deeply rooted in urban sprawl.

In the wake of these political events, it is reasonable to ask: can smart growth survive another term of President Bush? If so, what must be done to regain the momentum and capture the favor of an ever-growing conservative majority? In this period of national reflection, therefore, I consider the state of smart growth and its prospects for the near-term future. I start with a brief history of its evolution, continue with an examination of recent trends, and follow with an assessment of whether smart growth will change those trends. I conclude with recommendations for how smart growth might adapt to the new political realities.

A brief history of smart growth

The birth of smart growth is difficult to pinpoint. Antecedents include the growth controls of the 1960s and the growth management revolution of the 1970s and 1980s. Smart growth also shares principles with contemporaneous movements identified by the terms new urbanism and sustainable development. I will not attempt here to parse the distinctions implied by these terms. Still, clear discussion begins with definition. According to the EPA, Smart Growth is “development that serves the economy, the community, and the environment. It changes the terms of the development debate away from the traditional growth/no growth question to how and where should new development be accommodated” (Smart Growth Network 2004). Towards this end, the US EPA established in 1996, and continues to fund, a network of organizations dedicated to smart growth principles. Thanks in large to this network, smart growth is now part of the lexicon of planners, policy makers, and almost everyone with an interest in urban issues.

Though the origins of the term are unclear, the rapid ascendance of smart growth can be traced to three key projects (Burchell et al 2000). In the mid 1990s, the American Planning Association launched Growing Smart, an ambitious project that in 1997 produced the first edition of the Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook: Model Statutes for Planning and the Management of Change. In the same year, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Surface Transportation Policy Project published, The Took Kit for Smart Growth, which promoted compact growth, mixed land uses, and transit oriented development. Also in 1997, the State of Maryland passed the Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Act, which encouraged Brownfield Redevelopment, a Live Near Your Work housing assistance program, concentrating state-funded infrastructure in Priority Funding Areas, preserving Rural Legacy lands, and spatially concentrating Job Creation Tax Credits. Since then, smart growth programs—at least in name--have been promoted by groups that range from the Sierra Club to the National Association of Homebuilders.

Growing Smart in Chicago. Work on the Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook began in the research department of the American Planning Association in October, 1994 (Meck 2003). The genesis of the project came from two sources. In 1991, a HUD advisory committee on affordable housing recommended that HUD “work with government and private industry groups, such as the American Bar Association, and American Planning Association...and others to develop consensus-based model codes and statutes for use by State and local governments” (U.S. HUD 1991). Also in 1991, the APA created a task force to draft new model planning and zoning enabling legislation because it was “concerned about the number of bills to [reform] planning and land development control being introduced in state legislatures without an overall body of evaluative research to offer guidance” (Lewyn 2002; p.8-9). Initial funding for the project came from HUD and the Henry Jackson Foundation and subsequently from several other federal agencies, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Siemens Corporation and the APA itself. The project was guided by a large “directorate” which included representatives of many national interest groups and organizations.¹

As the Guidebook’s subtitle suggests, its purpose is to offer “Model Statutes for Planning and the Management of Change.” The intent was to supplant the Standard City Planning and Zoning Enabling Acts (SZEA) of the 1920s and the American Law Institute’s Model Land Development Code of 1976, which were widely viewed as out of date. According to the Guidebook, for example, the SZEA inadequately addresses: the state’s role in land use regulation, environmental issues such as land preservation, citizen participation, and judicial oversight.

¹ The directorate included representatives of the American Planning Association, Council of Governors' Policy Advisors, Council of State Community Development Agencies, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Association of Counties, National Association of Regional Councils, National Association of Towns and Townships, National Governors Association (*The NGA withdrew from the Directorate in April 200*), National League of Cities, U. S. Conference of Mayors, Member-at-Large for the Built Environment, Member-at-Large for Local Government Law, Member-at-Large for the Natural Environment.

In contrast to the SZEAs, which presented a single model for all states, the Guidebook presents alternative strategies and statutes from which state legislators can choose. It offers models for regional planning agencies, urban growth boundaries, adequate public facilities ordinances, impact fees, and more. It does not specifically promote the agenda now known as smart growth, though it includes many of the tools prescribed by smart growth advocates and offers excerpts from Maryland's Smart Growth Act as one possible alternative.

The final edition of the Legislative Guidebook was published in 2002 but was a source of controversy long before its publication. Technical issues such as "standing" and "moratoria" stimulated considerable debate among members of the directorate and slowed production. A group of property rights advocates requested HUD Secretary, Mel Martinez, to halt publication and convinced Congressman Steve Chabot (R-Ohio) to conduct an oversight hearing under the auspices of the House Judiciary Committee. Professional Builder Magazine announced it would give the APA its Professional Achievement Award for the Guidebook but later declined to make the award. Despite the controversy, most members of the Directorate still stand by the project and according to Stuart Meck, its principal author, 15 states have passed or considered bills that incorporate language directly from the final publication (Meck 2003).

Smart Growth in Maryland. Like the growth management programs of all other states, Maryland's smart growth programs reflect the geographic, political, and historic features of land use issues in the state. The historical roots of Maryland's smart growth program date to 1933, when Maryland established the nation's first State Planning Commission. By 1959, the Commission staff became the State Planning Department and, by 1969, was elevated to cabinet status as the Department of State Planning. A steady stream of planning legislation followed: the State Planning Act of 1974, the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Act of 1984, the failed growth management effort of the state's 2020 Commission in 1991, and the Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992.

Maryland's Planning Act of 1992 required local governments to prepare comprehensive land use plans, to incorporate six visions² and a sensitive-areas element in their plans, to encourage economic growth and regulatory streamlining, and to review their plans every six years. Once a plan is adopted, local governments may approve development projects that include state funds only if they are consistent with the plan. The state also may not fund a public works or transportation project unless the project is consistent with the applicable local plan. The Maryland Department of Planning must provide written commentary on the sensitive elements of all plans, but local governments need not incorporate the state's recommendations in the plan.

In 1996, following an extensive listening campaign, many meetings, and frequent forums, the Governor's office developed five initiatives (listed below) that made Maryland the undisputed leader of smart growth policy reforms.

- Priority Funding Areas: in this program State subsidies for new roads, water and other infrastructure will be available only for projects that are either within municipalities, within the I-495 and I-695 beltways, or within other locally designated areas that meet certain criteria set by the state;
- Rural Legacy Program: in this program the State provides funds for local governments and land trusts to purchase properties and development rights in rural areas threatened by encroaching development to preserve agriculture, forest and natural resource lands in contiguous blocks, corridors or greenways;
- Voluntary Cleanups/Brownfields Program: in this program the State provides financial incentives and technical assistance to eligible participants in the clean up and redevelopment of underutilized or abandoned industrial properties that are, or are perceived to be, contaminated;

² These six visions were established by the 2020 commission in 1988 and include: development is concentrated in suitable areas, sensitive areas are protected, in rural areas, development is directed toward existing population centers and resource areas are protected, stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and the land is a universal ethic, conservation of resources, including a reduction in resource consumption, is practiced, and funding mechanisms are addresses to achieve these visions. See Cohen (2002).

- Live Near Your Work Program: this program promotes linkages between employers and nearby communities by offering incentives to enable employees to buy homes in proximity to their workplaces; and
- Job Creation Tax Credits: in this program employers who create 25 or more new, full-time jobs within a Priority Funding Area are eligible for State income tax credits.

From the outset, Governor Glendening sought to develop a strategy that favored incentives over regulations, preserved local autonomy, could be rapidly implemented, would not create a new bureaucracy, and had modest budgetary impacts (Cohen 2002). For the most part, the five smart growth programs meet these requirements. Planning and development regulation remains primarily the domain of local governments. There is no state land use plan. The Department of Planning, and its budget, already existed; hence no new agency was needed. Further the administration of the programs was assigned to different state agencies: the Priority Funding Area program to the Department of Planning; the Rural Legacy program to the Department of Natural Resources; the Brownfields Redevelopment and Voluntary Clean up program to the Departments of Business and Economic Development and Department of Environment, respectively; the Live Near Your Work program to the Department of Housing and Community Development; and the Job Creation Tax Credit Program to the Department of Business and Economic Development. This assignment of programs to multiple agencies not only saved costs, but also built widespread support within state government.

Smarter Still in Washington DC. Although the axis of smart growth runs through Annapolis and Chicago, much of what is now known as smart growth was cultivated inside the beltway. Though the Legislative Guidebook was written in Chicago, the APA has an office in Washington, the project was funded by HUD, and most members of the directorate have offices in DC. Glendening and then Vice President Al Gore were no strangers, and the smart growth advocates in Annapolis worked closely with smart

growth advocates in Washington. It is no coincidence that Maryland is the only state member of the EPA's Smart Growth Network. This is not to imply that smart growth did not have advocates all over the nation, but it is certainly fair to say that smart growth was no quiet revolution spreading covertly from Burlington, Vermont, to Salem, Oregon, to Honolulu, Hawaii.

The federal government also played a significant role in the promotion of smart growth. Although the US GAO (1999) reported that the federal influence of urban sprawl is ambiguous, the federal government has always had a significant influence of land use in the United States. In 2000, a panel of experts listed the Interstate Highway Act and the Federal Housing Administration mortgage program as the two most influential determinants of metropolitan growth patterns in the post-war period (Fishman 2000). In the 1990s, however, the federal government took on a new role in land use policymaking—a role that combined the federal interest in transportation and air quality with local land use planning.

The seeds of smart growth in Washington were planted by the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), “a diverse, nationwide coalition working to ensure safer communities and smarter transportation choices that enhance the economy, improve public health, promote social equity, and protect the environment” (STPP 2004). Established in 1990, STPP was instrumental in the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), which in 1991 made the receipt of transportation funds by local governments contingent on conformance with the Clean Air Act.³ Further, the Act “challenges officials to reduce vehicle emissions, to reduce the number of single-occupant vehicles, and to make alternatives such as transit and bicycles a more viable part of the transportation network” (Jenson 2003). Through these provisions, the Act established the explicit interest of the Department of Transportation and the

³ One of the key draftsmen of the ISTEA legislation was Roy Kienitz, top aide to the late NY Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Kienitz later took over as head of STPP. Kienitz, left STPP to become planning secretary under Glendening, and now is deputy chief of staff under Ed Rendell in Pennsylvania.

Environmental Protection Agency in state and local land use planning and decision making.

The passage of ISTEA led to the creation of the Urban Economic Development Division (UEDD, now the division of Development, Community, and Environment) within the U.S. EPA Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation. Under the leadership of Harriet Tregoning (who later became Maryland's Secretary of Planning and, subsequently, the Special Secretary for Smart Growth in the Glendening Administration), the UEDD created the Smart Growth Network, provided funding for a variety of smart growth activities. This network, administered by the International City/County Management Association, consists of some 36 organizations, most of them not-for-profit interest groups, several trade organizations, two federal agencies (EPA and NOAA) and one state (Maryland). Members of the network are active all over the nation, but the headquarters of most are located in Washington.

Key principles and strategies

Of the 36 members of the smart growth network, each probably has a different definition of smart growth. Still most ascribe—in various degrees—to these ten principles.

- Mix land uses;
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a wide range of housing opportunities and choices;
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas;
- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices;
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

In many respects, however, these goals differ little from the goals of growth management, new urbanism, sustainable development, or just good planning. What's more, goals often reveal little about the activities and strategies that organizations pursue. In contrast to its antecedents, however, the smart growth movement can be characterized by the following principles and strategies:

- Incentives for implementation;
- Integrated transportation and land use policy;
- Insurgency and advocacy;
- Innovative policy instruments; and
- Institutional reform.

Incentives for implementation. To the extent that Maryland provides the model of smart growth strategies, incentives are the instruments that drive implementation. The strategy of the Glendening administration was to promote a set of policies that would not raise strong opposition by Maryland's powerful counties. Incentives were the answer. Under Maryland's Smart Growth Act, local governments can grow anywhere they want, but state funds for accommodating development are available only within Priority Funding Areas. Property owners need not clean up and redevelop their properties, but the state provides grants for doing so. Residents can live anywhere, but the state and local governments provide grants for those who purchase homes near their work. Farm and forestland can be developed, but the state will buy land or development rights from those who refrain from development. Businesses can expand anywhere, but the threshold for state tax credits for job creation is lower for businesses that expand in Priority Funding Areas.

Incentives, or market orientations--are features of many other smart growth policy instruments. Transferable development rights do not by themselves restrict development in rural areas but grant farmers the opportunity to trade development rights in rural areas for development rights in urban areas. Density bonuses enable developers to develop at higher densities if they provide local governments with affordable housing units,

dedicated parklands, or other forms of compensation. Transportation-efficient mortgages enable low-income residents who purchase homes near transit stations to claim transportation cost savings as part of their capacity to make mortgage payments. Impact fees allow developers to develop in areas with inadequate public services when they pay their share of the cost of public service improvements. Historic preservation tax credits provide incentives for the preservation of historic buildings and the redevelopment in inner-city neighborhoods. Most of these market-oriented instruments were not part of the earlier growth management programs but represent central tools for smart growth implementation.

Insurgency and advocacy. The focus of smart growth advocates on insurgency and advocacy was clearly intentional. Although smart growth had the blessing of the Clinton-Gore administration, the authority of federal agencies to participate in land use decision making is limited. Further, smart growth was conceived in the era of sound bites, the Internet, and spin. Thus, the UEDD division of the EPA, itself unable to do so, sought to influence local land use policy by funding advocacy and insurgency by its Network members. The stated mission of the Network is (Smart Growth Network 2004):

- Raising public awareness of smart growth and the implications of development decisions for the economy, community and the environment;
- Promoting smart growth best practices through educational publications and other venues;
- Developing and sharing information, innovative policies, tools, and ideas;
- Fostering collaboration among network partners and members who represent various interest, to apply smart growth approaches to resolve problems of the built environment; and
- Cultivating strategies to address barriers to, and to advance opportunities for, smart growth.

Towards these ends, the UEDD provided grants to many of the major players in the smart growth arena, including grants to (Samuel and O'Toole 1999):

- 1000 Friends of Oregon to establish the National Growth Management Leadership Project
- National Association of Governors to help states develop smart growth strategies;
- Growth Management Institute for workshops, focus groups, and anti sprawl activities;
- Center for Watershed Protection to develop smart growth zoning codes;
- Congress for New Urbanism for workshops and conferences; and
- Coalition for Utah's Future to support Envision Utah's community workshops.

Though not a charter member, foremost among the smart growth network is Smart Growth America. Smart Growth America was formed in 2000 and is self described as “a nationwide coalition promoting a better way to grow: one that protects farmland and open space, revitalizes neighborhoods, keeps housing affordable, and provides more transportation choices” (Smart Growth America 2004). Smart Growth America is an active lobbyist with close connections to the Senate Smart Growth Task Force, the House Livable Communities Task Force, the Housing Sustainable Development Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus Transportation Brain Trust. Smart Growth America has been instrumental in several high-profile projects, including projects that produced “The Link Between Growth Management and Housing Affordability: The Academic Evidence,” and “Measuring the Health Effects of Sprawl.”

In 2002, after two terms as governor of Maryland, Parris Glendening and Harriet Tregoning convinced Smart Growth America to establish a subsidiary organization called the Smart Growth Leadership Institute to provide “technical and strategic assistance to communities working to achieve smart growth” (Smart Growth America 2004). With funding from the EPA, the Smart Growth Leadership Institute is currently providing smart growth technical assistance to nine communities across the country.

Transportation and Land Use. Recognition of the link between transportation and land use is not new. Melvin Webber in 1959 wrote an essay entitled, “The Engineer’s

Responsibility for the Form of Cities.” And in the early ‘70s, Steve Putman and others in the U.S. Department of Transportation were experimenting with “an Integrated Transportation and Land Use Models Package” (Putman 1976). Still, in the 1990s transportation and land use policy became much more interconnected and the focus of two smart growth principles.

The seminal work in this area was the Land Use, Transportation, Air Quality Project spearheaded by 1000 Friends of Oregon. One Thousand Friends of Oregon, itself a pioneering land use advocacy organization, mobilized opposition to a bypass freeway in Washington County, Oregon, in 1991. With funding from the EPA, the Federal Highway Administration, and others, 1000 Friends led a team of planning and transportation engineering consultants in an effort to demonstrate the superiority of a land use and transit alternative to the proposed freeway. When the highway proposal was successfully defeated, the project became a model for advocacy organizations around the nation. For better or for worse, any new major transportation investment in the U.S. today—whether highway or transit—is likely to draw the attention of multiple advocacy organizations armed with studies that support both the build and no build option.

The success of 1000 Friends of Oregon was matched, if not surpassed, by the Surface Transportation Policy Project. STPP led the effort to pass the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991 and its successor the TEA21 in 1998. Both bills provided billions of dollars to the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program, which have been used for a variety of transportation and land use projects around the nation. The idea that transportation and land use are connected is perhaps not new, but in the smart growth era, land use and transportation policies have become deeply intertwined.

Innovative policy instruments. The smart growth movement also differs from its antecedents in its approach to policy instrumentation. Whereas advocates of growth management relied extensively on the standard tools of zoning, subdivision regulations, and comprehensive plans, smart growth advocates, generally eschew these tools or call

for their substantial reform. This is less true for the Legislative Guidebook, where recommendations for zoning reforms are only marginal. And though the Maryland Department of Planning has produced its own model land use ordinance, comprehensive planning and zoning are still fundamental elements of land use governance in the state.

Pressure for the reform of zoning and subdivision regulations comes primarily from the smart growth nucleus in Washington. Listed on the website of the Smart Growth Network are extensive lists of models and recommendations for the reform of ordinances, codes, statutes, and policies. But this list pales in comparison to the plethora of tools, strategies, and implementation tools offered by the Smart Growth coalition. Indeed, the inaugural book by STPP and the Natural Resources Defense Council was *A Toolkit for Smart Growth*. Since then, the Smart Growth Network has helped to produce *Local Tools for Smart Growth*, *Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation*, and *Getting to Smart Growth II: 100 More Policies for Implementation*.

Institutional Reform. The call for institutional reform is pervasive throughout the smart growth coalition but is most prominent at the APA. After all, the *raison d'être* of the Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook is the reform of state land use statutes. Again, the Guidebook merely offers a menu of alternative approaches to statutory reform, but there is no doubt that the Guidebook favors a stronger role for state and regional governments in land use decision making. Not only does the Guidebook offer models for a state planning agency, state plans, and state land use controls, it also offers requirements for local plans and models for the establishment of regional planning agencies. The Brookings Institution, not a formal member of the Smart Growth Network but with many overlapping interests, is also a strong supporter of stronger regional participation in land use decision making. Calls for regional approaches and regional institutions certainly appear among the 200-plus strategies for smart growth offered by the Smart Growth Network, but greater regional or state participation in land use decision making is not high on the Network agenda, perhaps because the network membership includes many local government organizations and is funded in large by the US EPA.

Institutional reform was also not the central element of smart growth in Maryland. At the time Maryland's Smart Growth Act was passed, Maryland already had a state office of planning and already required local governments to plan and zone. Maryland has no regional governments—other than the councils of governments and metropolitan planning organizations that are found everywhere. In fact, most of Maryland's smart growth reforms were restraints imposed by the state government on itself. In essence, the thrust of smart growth in Maryland—through the designation of PFAs--is to minimize the state's funding for urban sprawl. By executive order, Governor Glendening did establish a smart growth subcabinet—which included the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture; Budget & Management; Business & Economic Development; Environment; General Services; Housing & Community Development; Natural Resources; Transportation; the Commissioner of the Higher Education Commission; and the Executive Director of the National Center for Smart Growth Research & Education Governor Glendening similarly pushed through legislation to create an Office of Smart Growth within the Governor's office, headed by a Special Secretary for Smart Growth. But during the current administration of Robert Ehrlich, the special secretary was never replaced, the majority of its employees left or were dismissed, and the Office of Smart Growth was downsized and subsumed within the Department of Planning. The subcabinet rarely meets.

Are we growing smart?

Trying to assess whether we are indeed growing smart is inherently dicey. The notion is ill defined, the dates of policy intervention are murky, and the targets of change are complex. Further, the movement is yet young. The final version of the *Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook* was published only two years ago; the Maryland Smart Growth Act was passed only seven years ago, and the first edition of the *Smart Growth Toolkit* is only 12 years old. It is naïve to think that 60 plus years of “dumb growth” can be reversed in such a short period. Still, it is at least interesting to review what has transpired since the smart growth movement began and to consider the direction of trends

in urban development patterns, consumer preferences, and the efficacy of the smart growth experiment in Maryland.

Urban Development Trends. Trying to assess national development trends is always difficult. Cities are slow to change and data are notoriously stale. Fortunately, recent analyses of the 2000 census data provide some insights into what has transpired over the decade of the 1990s. At first blush, the trends look promising. Many Northeastern and Midwestern cities with more than 500,000 people gained population for the first time since 1950. Chicago grew by four percent; New York City grew by nine percent. Overall the median growth rate for cities in the 1990s was 8.7 percent, more than double the median growth rate in the 1980s (Glaeser and Shapiro 2001). The pattern of growth, however, was highly uneven. Cities grew more rapidly in the west, south, and along the coastlines. Faster growing cities had economies with smaller industrial sectors, attracted more immigrants, and featured warmer temperatures. Florida (2000) points out that faster growing cities have higher levels of education and more cultural opportunities, high-tech jobs, and gays; Glaeser and Kahn (2001) point out that faster growing cities have more cars.

While the population growth of metropolitan areas is good news from a smart growth perspective, the spatial pattern of population growth is less encouraging. In the 35 largest metropolitan areas of the United States, central cities grew by 7.8 percent while their suburbs grew by 16.5 percent (Lucy and Phillips 2001). Today, 50 percent of Americans live in the suburbs compared with 30 percent only 40 years ago. Within the central cities that grew, 60 percent of that growth occurred in “outer ring neighborhoods” (Katz 2002). Two-thirds of all downtown census tracts gained population, but these gains were usually offset by population losses elsewhere in the urban core (Berube and Foreman 2001). Today, “boomburbs,” defined as suburbs with more than 100,000 residents are growing at double digit rates (Lang 2001). In the 1990s, these places accounted for over half of the growth in cities between 100,000 and 400,000 residents.

The pattern of employment growth is even less encouraging. By 1996, less than 22 percent of employment was located within 3 miles of the city center; 35 percent of employment was located more than ten miles from the center. Employment density gradients have fallen significantly since the 1960s. What's more employment levels in "edge cities" now rival that of central cities (Garreau 1991). Even these have now been eclipsed by "edgeless cities" (Lang 2004). According to Lang, these cities, a sprawling form of office development that does not have the density or cohesiveness of edge cities, "may be the ultimate result of a metropolitan process that has been tearing apart concentrated commercial development for the better part of a century (Lang 2004)."

The spatial distributions of population and employment say little, however, about the form of urban growth. For this reason, scholars have developed a variety of innovative measures of urban form (Knaap et al 2004). Most, however, lack time series data and thus cannot provide measures of changes over time. The most commonly reported measures of change in urban development patterns compare growth in urban populations with growth in urbanized areas. The Sierra Club (2004), for example, reports that between 1960 and 1990 urban areas in the United States grew twice as fast as urban populations. Fulton et al. (2001) find that between 1982 and 1997 urbanized land in the United States increased by 47 percent while urban populations increased by only 17 percent. Of the 281 metropolitan areas they examined, only 17 became more dense over the same period.

Despite the release of several new indexes that reveal "who sprawls the most," the extant literature on the measurement of sprawl remains underdeveloped. Metropolitan- and county-wide measures of sprawl, for example, fail to capture intra-metropolitan differences and recent trends in urban form. To provide such information, Knaap and Song (2004) measured development density, land use mix, street network patterns, accessibility to commercial uses, and pedestrian access to commercial uses for neighborhoods of varying age in five study areas: Maricopa County, Arizona; Orange County, Florida; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; Montgomery County, Maryland; and

Portland, Oregon. They found that urban form varies a great deal between and within metropolitan areas, but that some trends appear pervasive:

- Single family house sizes have grown continuously since 1940 but single family lot sizes began falling in about the 1970s.
- Since about 1970, neighborhoods have become more internally connected but external connectivity (that is, road connections from one neighborhood to another) remains low in three of the five metropolitan areas;⁴
- Land use mix within neighborhoods exhibits no obvious trends but pedestrian access to commercial uses has consistently fallen over time.⁵

The good news is that single family lot sizes are falling and internal connectivity is improving. The bad news is more extensive: external connectivity is deteriorating, land uses remain separated, and pedestrian accessibility to commercial uses is falling. If these trends continue, it is likely that traffic congestion, especially for non-work trips, will only get worse.

Public support and consumer preferences. Gauging public support for smart growth and smarter forms of urban development is a task fraught with potential bias and misinterpretation. One thing is certain: there has been no shortage of attempts to do so, in part, no doubt, to support the advocacy work both for and against smart growth. A google search on “smart growth survey” yields over 130 hits; a similar search on “housing preference survey” yields over 100, though many of these are directed at incoming freshmen. Perhaps not surprisingly, the results vary, depending on who is asking the questions, how the questions are asked, and when the question was posed.

⁴ Internal connectivity measures the proportion of nodes in the road network that are cul-de-sacs or dead ends; the greater the proportion of deadends, the lower the internal connectivity. External connectivity measures the distance between access points into neighborhoods; the greater the distance, the lower the external connectivity.

⁵ Land use mix is measured as an entropy index of proportions of different land uses; the higher the index, the greater the mix. Pedestrian accessibility to commercial uses is measured as the percent of homes in a neighborhood within a quarter mile of a commercial use; the higher the proportion, the greater the pedestrian accessibility.

There is little doubt that urban sprawl and issues of community character remain high on the list of public concerns, though obviously such concern varies considerably from place to place (Active Living Research 2004). In a national survey by the Pew Center for Civic Journalism (1999), Americans ranked traffic and urban sprawl as their number one local concern, tied with crime and ahead of jobs and education. In the 2000 election, smart growth was an implicit element of the Gore platform and 72 percent of growth and open-space related ballot measures were passed (Meyers and Puentes 2001). Four years later, though traffic congestion remains high among public concerns (American Public Transit Association 2004), terrorism and economic security have largely removed smart growth from the national policy dialog.

Like popular support for other environmental issues, support for smart growth varies over the business cycle. But nearly always, urban growth is unpopular where it is rapid and desperately pursued where it is slow. But there appear to be some constants. First, there is widespread popular support for most of the principles of smart growth as long as there is no mention of cost. A national poll by Beldon Russonello & Stewart (2000) for Smart Growth America found roughly 80 percent support for the principle propositions of smart growth: focusing growth in existing communities, protecting greenspaces and farmland, and spending more money on sidewalks and other forms of pedestrian infrastructure. Similar overwhelming majorities support land use planning, better coordination among local governments, and better growth management in the state. About half said that traffic congestion had gotten worse and about half favored public transport as a policy response. In a poll by the National Association of Realtors (2000) 45 percent of respondents said growth should be managed by neighborhood organizations, 45 percent said growth should be managed by local governments, 4 percent said growth should be managed by state governments, and one percent favored federal control of growth.

The evidence on consumer preferences for neighborhoods and housing is even more complex. Visual preference surveys consistently show a strong preference for leafy, well-designed neighborhoods regardless of density (Neleson 2004). Several surveys of potential homebuyers also reveal a growing preference for high-density living

(townhouses and small lots) in places that are pedestrian friendly, have ample open spaces, and have convenient access to neighborhood retail (National Association of Realtors and National Association of Homebuilders 2002). Dowall and Gearin (2001) further speculate that as the population ages and fertility rates decline, the demand for smart growth and new urbanist lifestyles could grow significantly. Yet the evidence to support this proposition is mixed at best. A 2002 survey by the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Homebuilders (2002) found that 42 percent of respondents would choose a “large single family house in an outlying suburban area with longer distances to work, public transportation, and shopping,” while 18 percent would choose a “small single family home in the city, close to work, public transportation, and shopping.” Further, in a just-released study for the National Association of Realtors and Smart Growth America (Belden Russonello & Stewart Research and Communications 2004), 55 percent chose the smart growth community over the sprawl community; but 45 percent chose the sprawl community with a one-way commute of over 45 minutes! Combined, these results suggest that the demand for housing in smart growth neighborhoods is not trivial and growing, but they also suggest that the demand for large houses on large suburban lots—even at the expense of long commutes—is still dominant and likely to remain so in the foreseeable future.

A number of studies have approached this question by looking at variations in housing prices. Epli and Tu (1999) in a national study found that houses in New Urbanist communities sold at a premium over houses in conventional suburban neighborhoods. They did not, however, examine what feature of a new urbanist neighborhood produced the price premium. Song and Knaap (2003) also found that houses in New Urbanist communities sold at a price premium in Washington County, Oregon. Because they collected detailed information on specific characteristics of specific neighborhoods, however, they were able to identify which features of New Urbanism produced the price premium. Specifically, they found that houses sold at a premium if they were located in highly internally connected neighborhoods, if they were close to parks and open spaces, and if they had pedestrian access to commercial uses. They also found, however, that houses sold at a discount if they were located in neighborhoods that were highly

externally connected, had high densities, and had a mixture of uses. Like the results of surveys and visual preference studies, these results suggest that there is a demand for some smart growth neighborhood characteristics, but that the demand for the large, single family home in a conventional suburban neighborhood remains dominant.

The Maryland Experiment. Research on the efficacy of Smart Growth in Maryland has grown in recent years, largely as a result of work at the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education. Cohen and Pruess (2002) examined the efficacy of Montgomery County's well-known transferable development rights program. Under this program, development rights in Montgomery County's agricultural reserve could be sold or transferred to areas within the existing urban envelope. Cohen and Pruess found the price of development rights falling over time, the supply of receiving areas diminishing, and the extent to which the programs preserves farmland in doubt. Further, because the program failed to target the most the most fertile soils as sending areas, and failed to provide adequate and timely infrastructure in receiving areas, the popularity of the program has fallen significantly.

Sohn and Howland (forthcoming) examined the effects of Maryland's Priority Funding Areas on investments in sewer infrastructure from 1997 to 2002. According to Maryland's Smart Growth statutes, passed in 1997, the state will only invest in urban infrastructure inside PFAs. They found that of the total amount invested in sewer infrastructure by counties, 25 percent was invested on sewer infrastructure outside PFAs. But of the total amount invested by the state, 29 percent was invested on sewer infrastructure outside PFAs. Most of these investments were used to repair nonperforming septic systems. Still, these findings suggest that even the state has difficulty conforming with smart growth incentives—and perhaps for good reason.

Sohn and Knaap (forthcoming) examined the effects of Maryland's job creation tax credit program (JCTC), which, since 1997, provides greater credits for job creation inside than outside priority funding areas. Using data on job growth in Maryland from 1996 to 2000, they found that job growth was greater inside than outside PFA's, holding other things

constant, but only for jobs in the Service sector. Based on these results, they concluded that Maryland's JCTC program can help to concentrate job growth in PFA's but that the contribution of the JCTC program toward such concentration is likely to be small.

The research to date, though still more exploratory than conclusive, suggests that the effects of Maryland's approach to smart growth have been marginal at best. To date there is little evidence that the incentives provided by the State are of sufficient magnitude to stem or reverse longstanding development trends. During the Glendening administration, the state spent considerable sums purchasing open space and protecting farmland outside Priority Funding Areas. But there is little evidence that growth has been contained outside PFAs or that local governments are encouraging development inside PFAs. In fact, the evidence suggests quite the opposite (Knaap et al 2003).

Public Policy and Institutional Reform. Change in land use policies and institutions are also difficult to assess systematically. With the flurry of activities regularly reported in smart growth newsletters and on smart growth websites, it is hard to imagine new policies are not being adopted and institutions are not being reformed. Further, according to a survey conducted by the American Planning Association (2002) "smart growth activity in the states between 1999 and 2001 confirms that these subjects are among the top political concerns in the statehouses across the nation." As indicators of activity, the American Planning Association (2002) reports:

- more than 2000 planning bills were introduced between 1999 and 2001 with approximately 20 percent of the bills being approved;
- 17 governors issued 19 executive orders on planning, smart growth and related topics during the past two years compared to 12 orders issued during the previous eight years combined;
- eight states issued legislative task force reports on smart growth between 1999 and 2001, compared to 10 reports between 1990 and 1998;
- 27 governors: 15 Republicans, 10 Democrats, and 2 independents made specific smart growth related proposals in 2001;

- approximately one-quarter of the states are implementing moderate to substantial statewide planning reforms: Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin;
- Approximately one-third of the states are actively pursuing their first major statewide planning forms: Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

In a more recent assessment of the impact of the Guidebook, Salkin (2004) lists activities in 14 states and concludes: “the Guidebook is in fact influencing lawmaking and policymaking in various statehouses as some of the model language is being implemented.” The question of implementation, however, is a matter of degree. Though the list is long and the sources well documented, it is easy to misinterpret. There is no doubt that committees have been formed in the various states, and on occasion these have led to the introduction of legislation. Sometimes this legislation is passed. Even then, however, the impact is often marginal. In Illinois, for example, a Local Planning Technical Assistance Act was passed in 2002 based on a model statute in the Guidebook. But the task was assigned to the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, an agency fundamentally antagonistic to the concept of planning, and no funds were ever authorized to enable the agency to provide the assistance. As in the case of Maryland, planning reform acts with impressive names are often not quite what they seem.

The adoption of new policies at the local level is also difficult to assess. Once again, however, there are signs of change. In a series of papers for the Brookings Institution, Fulton and colleagues document substantial growth in the use of urban containment policies (such as urban growth boundaries, priority funding areas, and urban service areas) (Pendall, Martin, and Fulton 2002) , transferable development rights (Fulton et al 2004), and open space purchases (Hollis and Fulton 2002). The Smart Growth website of the EPA lists 119 examples of smart growth policies recently enacted at the state and local levels.

Recent research by Pendall and his colleagues, however, casts some doubt about growth in the adoption of smart growth policy instruments. Using the results of national surveys of local governments administered in 1994 and 2003, Pendall et al (2004) found little evidence that sprawl-fighting measures increased in the aggregate over this period. In general, Pendall et al found almost no change in the use of plans, zoning, or urban growth boundaries. In California, the use of urban growth boundaries and permit caps actually fell. Nationwide there was a modest rise in the use of density bonuses and inclusionary zoning, but a decline in the use of adequate public facilities ordinances. Perhaps the most interesting finding in the Pendall study was the degree of fluctuation in the use of smart growth policies. State Pendall et al (p.12):

Assuming the respondents answered correctly in both years, abandonment (the termination of policies) is more or nearly as common as adoption in five of eight growth management or growth-control measures: low-density only zoning (50 abandonments, 52 adoptions), permissive high density zoning (68 to 51), urban growth boundaries (70 to 79), pace control (16 to 17), and adequate public facility ordinances (54 to 35). Only moratoria and the two affordable housing programs had substantially less abandonment than adoption between 1994 and 2003.

In sum, the evidence on development patterns, consumer preferences, and public policies suggest that not much is trending in the direction of smart growth. Further, the evidence from Maryland suggests that its smart growth policies appear to be having limited effects—so far. There are, of course, two ways to interpret these results. The first is to conclude that the need for smarter growth continues to rise; the second is to conclude that smart growth, to date, is not having much effect. The truth is probably some combination of both. The question is why.

Why aren't we growing smarter?

Urban growth and transportation issues remain prominent among popular concerns; the reform of statutes that govern land use policy continues slowly but steadily; and an increasing number of subdivisions exhibit New Urbanist principles. Yet, the obstacles to significant change in the spatial structure of American cities remain formidable. These include social and institutional inertia, long term economic fundamentals, and lack of a coherent reform strategy

Resistance to Change. The first major obstacle is simply this: the task is monumental. Cities of the northeastern United States are approximately 300 years old, western cities only slightly younger than that. And while cities of the United States are expected to add more than 90 million residents over the next three decades, change will be difficult. Nelson (2004), however, is optimistic. He sees the populations of cities increasing by 50 percent over the next 30 years and no reason why such growth can't lead to a significant restructuring of metropolitan areas. Bertaud (2001) is less sanguine. He sees the current density of Atlanta, and American cities in general, as too low to sustain any form of public transportation. For Bertaud, the die is cast; given existing development patterns, American cities are destined for dominance by the automobile and automobile-oriented urban form.

The most formidable obstacle to smart growth is inertia. Change is hard. And for significant change in urban structure there must be significant change in preferences, politics, institutions, and infrastructure. None of this will occur quickly. Preferences are changing, but preferences are socially constructed—shaped in part by demographics, social institutions, and the sprawl-industrial complex. This complex of developers, homebuilders, financial institutions, automobile manufacturers, and the highway construction industry all have vested interests in the status quo. Although there is no Status Quo Network, there is also never a shortage of response to the latest study to extol the virtues of smart growth. Perhaps the most formidable obstacles to smart growth are the millions of current homeowners of the United States. As articulated by Bill Fischel (2001) every *homevoter* has a stake in the status quo. Rarely are the social benefits of

infill, higher densities, and especially regional institutional change sufficiently compelling as to draw the support of this dominant constituency.

Economic Fundamentals. Inertia, of course, can be overcome--under strong, persistent, and pervasive economic pressure for change. But the economic fundamentals are mixed at best. Few these days take seriously the proposition that information and telecommunication technologies will render cities obsolete. Glaeser, Kahn, and Chu (2001) argue convincingly that information technologies and face-to-face contact are complements and not substitutes. Cities are not obsolete. Still it is clear that firms are increasingly footloose and less attracted to city centers. According to Audirac (2002): "the form of the information age metropolis emerges as (1) polycentric and intensely extra-networked by land, air, water, and digital means to global and regional urban systems; and (2), deeply digitally and multi-modally intra-networked, albeit all the more socio-economically segregated, physically overextended, and stuck in traffic." In standard economic theory, urban decentralization (the economist's word for sprawl) increases when incomes rise and transportation costs fall. For both of these reasons, urban areas have "sprawled" world wide since the beginning of time. It will take a coherent strategy and powerful public policies to reverse these trends now.

Incoherent Strategies. Unfortunately, smart growth strategies have been neither coherent nor imbedded in particularly powerful public policies. The combination of incentives, institutional change, and counter insurgency would seem sufficient to bring about significant change. In fact, they're probably not. Institutional change, perhaps the most important element, is proceeding slowly and with marginal effect. To provide a smorgasbord approach, and appease its diverse directorate, the Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook seems to imply that any change is positive change. But while APA claims credit for shaping the language of legislation, the agenda's of legislative task forces, and statutory reforms in Wisconsin and Tennessee, it played no role in the development of the best land use programs in the nation: those in Oregon and Washington. Further, in the competition for public favorable public exposure, the APA was often preempted by its adversaries and unsuccessful at generating favorable spin.

Inadequate Incentives. The incentive approach taken by Maryland also has significant limitations. Bowing to political pressures, the state failed to constrain the powers of local governments and hoped that by limiting state spending within Priority Funding Areas, buying development rights in rural areas, and creating a few incentive programs it could significantly alter development trends in this still rapidly growing state. It has not. Perhaps things would have been different had Democrat Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, not Republican Robert Ehrlich, followed Glendening, or if the state deficit had not removed the punch from the incentive programs. But perhaps not. Without stronger state oversight, local governments in Maryland will continue to plan and zone land for parochial benefit, often at the expense of the region. Further, incentives and market approaches assume that problems can be solved solely by adjusting prices, as though growth and development requires no planning or coordination.

Counterproductive policies. The advocacy and insurgency led by the EPA has likely had a significant impact on popular opinion and the efficacy of smart growth advocacy organizations. But it's not clear that the net effect has been positive. Rising concerns about sprawl and increased demands for open space, as in Maryland, can favor balkanization over regional integration. Further, it is clear that the local adoption of some policies promoted by the Smart Growth Network—such as urban growth boundaries, open space protection, conservation easements, and New Urbanist subdivisions—can be counterproductive at the regional level. Local urban growth boundaries can deflect growth to more distant locations, open space protections and conservation easements can lower densities, and New Urbanist subdivisions, while increasing internal connectivity, often decrease external connectivity. In some ways, the proliferation of smart growth policies has led to more parochialism and less smart growth.

In short, with exception of some chapters in the Legislative Guidebook, the smart growth movement is fundamentally not rooted in planning. It is important that the public understands the consequences of sprawl and the benefits of managed urban growth. It is also important the public policies do not distort prices in favor of sprawl. But the

fundamental cause of sprawl is the lack of coordinated decision making across sectors, over space, and through time. This cause cannot be addressed by changing prices or preferences; it must be addressed by planning.

Toward a more centrist smart growth strategy

Despite an unpopular war, a struggling economy, and an inarticulate candidate, the Republican Party not only retained the presidency, it strengthened its control of both the House and Senate. Similarly, despite rising concerns about urban sprawl, growing awareness of smart growth, and a spate of opportunities for policy reform, urban sprawl largely continues largely unabated. To remain competitive with their Republican rivals, Democrats must devise new strategies for winning public support. To compete effectively with urban sprawl, smart growth advocates must do the same. Toward that end, I offer five strategies for reform.

1. Stop perpetuating myths that alienate critical constituencies.

In attempts to gain public support and to expand the umbrella, smart growth advocates perpetuate myths that support their cause. Here I address only three. First, the United States is not running out of farmland. Protecting farmland has the benefit of preserving open space and slowing haphazard urban expansion. For these reasons it makes sense to manage urban growth. But the argument that we need to protect farmland for food security is a canard that alienates rural constituencies and undermines the credibility of its proponents. What is needed are better plans for the use of rural lands and for the orderly conversion of farmland to alternative uses such as forests, wetlands, and natural areas.⁶

Second, urban infill and redevelopment is not less costly than the development of greenfields. If this were true, both developers and local governments would clamor for infill opportunities. They don't. Excess infrastructure capacity is rare in urban areas and

⁶ This point deserves more discussion than is possible here, but the general point is that smart approaches to growth management will require much more than farmland preservation and more concerted attention to both sides of the urban-rural interface.

redevelopment often requires substantial infrastructure upgrades and retrofits. To preserve the health and vitality of inner cities, infill and redevelopment are worthy and important endeavors. But it is not cheap.

Third, densely developed neighborhoods are not inherently healthier than low-density neighborhoods. There is growing evidence that adults walk more for utilitarian purposes in high-density neighborhoods--and there is no doubt that many suburban neighborhoods are poorly designed for safe, non-motorized travel. But it strains credulity to argue that children are necessarily healthier living in smaller houses and in neighborhoods with less private open space. Farmland preservationists, central city residents, and citizens concerned about public health are useful to have as smart growth advocates, and many of their arguments have merit. But extreme versions of their arguments are not credible, and antagonize residents of rural areas, residents of suburbs, and families with children.

2. Focus on the reform of institutions and processes, not on the promotion of lifestyles.

Of the ten principles of smart growth, eight are substantive and two are procedural. Though the substantive principles are written in general language, there is little doubt about what they promote: compact, high density, mixed use, transit-oriented, and pedestrian friendly neighborhoods. Perhaps these kinds of neighborhoods are undersupplied and do less damage to the environment, to the public purse, and to the health of its residents. But they are not the types of neighborhoods in which most Americans live or are likely to live in the near future. What is needed, therefore, are institutions and planning processes that facilitate coordination and integration of alternative neighborhoods and lifestyles; not the promotion of one lifestyle over the other. A platform that favors the lifestyles of a minority is unlikely to succeed. What's more, the car and the lifestyle it facilitates will not soon disappear. An often forgotten fact about the history of the Oregon land use program is that the program was created by Senate Bill 100 in 1973; the goals and guidelines were adopted in 1974. The lesson: changes the institutions first, then define the objectives.

3. Promote the use of information and information technologies.

The Legislative Guidebook promotes land market monitoring for the management of urban growth boundaries. The Smart Growth Network also promotes the use of a variety of sustainability and other types of indicators. But what are needed are indicators that provide timely information on local conditions, plans, regulations, and development decisions. Examples include the build out analysis led by the Massachusetts Executive Office of the Environment (2004) the work of the development capacity task force led by the Maryland Department of Planning (2004), and the National Demonstration project in land market monitoring, led by the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education (2004). These types of analyses and monitoring effects not only help in local government decision making, but also hold local governments accountable to a larger regional constituency. Better land use information leads to better land use planning, which leads to better land use. Other promising uses of information technologies in planning include scenario analysis as conducted by Portland Metro, Envision Utah, and Chicago 2020, These types of efforts are unobtrusive, facilitate public participation, and represent the cutting edge of smart growth.

4. Strengthen and expand the use of market instruments.

Although Maryland's experiment with economic incentives has had limited success, incentives must remain a prominent feature of a centrist's strategy for smart growth. The key, however, is to use incentives large enough to affect economic decision making, when the problem is fundamentally a distortion of prices and not a need for coordination, where pricing does not undermine planning, and where incentives can be administered in a cost effective manner. For one or more of the reasons above, this precludes the use of priority funding areas, live-near-your work programs, and transferable development rights. Congestion tolls and impact fees, however, meet all of the above conditions. In fact, congestion fees and other forms of road pricing represent the most promising and underutilized growth management tool at our disposal. For impact fees to work well, however, they should vary by the type of development, by the location of development, and with the capacity of current infrastructure. It is hard to imagine enabling legislation

that allows for such variation. Thus, negotiated fees and proffers, strictly scrutinized, might be the next best approach.

5. Raise the profile of efforts to promote social justice.

As the agenda of generally progressive organizations, smart growth has always supported the notion of social justice. And despite evidence to the contrary, smart growth has always been promoted as a means for providing affordable housing. But in a widely circulated paper, Baum (2003) criticized smart growth advocates for neglecting issues of community, race, and education. Not all of his arguments are valid, and smart growth advocacy organizations have recently organized several events that highlight issues of equity and race. Still, among the listed members of the Smart Growth Network there are no organizations that explicitly represent minorities, affordable housing, or education (Smart Growth Network 2004). Embracing such organizations may not move the network closer to the center, but might expand and strengthen its base.

A requiem for smart growth?

Despite the political climate and the formidable forces of opposition, it is premature to play a requiem for smart growth. A strong, growing, and vocal minority will not let it die, and has co-opted many of its adversaries. Clearly, there remains much work to be done. Still every organization and organism must change to survive. And if smart growth is to become more than the rallying cry of a sizable minority, it must move to the center. In this time of transition and reflection, now might be a good time to make plans to do so.

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