Ten Years of Smart Growth: A Nod to Policies Past and a Prospective Glimpse Into the Future

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This article reflects the views of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Abstract

Smart growth policies seek to remove barriers to homeownership, adequate public facilities, and employment opportunities by providing access to valuable land resources in suburban and urban centers. As of 2006, nearly 20 states have implemented smart growth-oriented directives, and many local and regional entities have also incorporated smart growth practices into their comprehensive master plans. As more states continue to grapple with ways to tackle urban sprawl, many of them have begun to experiment with various policy tools, such as urban growth boundaries, limitations on exclusionary zoning, and impact fees. This article traces the historical development of smart growth in the United States, looking at past state and local growth management policies that eventually led to the smart growth movement. The article then turns to a discussion on how smart growth policies have guided state and local governments in their challenge to mitigate the effects of urban sprawl. The article concludes by highlighting best practices and innovative approaches that governments at all levels have implemented to address various land use issues for the future.

Introduction

A growing chorus of advocates has rallied behind state and local governments to push for comprehensive land use reforms. These constituencies—mostly from urban planning, environmental, and corporate entities—are calling for innovative strategies to combat urban and suburban sprawl,

a pattern of land use characterized by randomly dispersed and low-density development. A new, more integrative approach to land use practices is being advanced, with state and local government entities assuming the lead. Smart growth has become one policy alternative that has received nationwide attention at all levels of government. In the most general sense, "smart growth" is defined as a growth management policy that addresses sprawl by directing land development away from metropolitan areas that experience accelerated growth and reinvesting valuable resources to depressed urban and suburban neighborhoods. Smart growth policies have three defining characteristics: (1) they generally encourage compact designs and high-density development, (2) they typically place strict limitations on building projects in sprawling communities, and (3) they usually involve comprehensive approaches to land use planning decisions.

Since the inception of smart growth nearly a decade ago, advocates celebrate the fact that well over a dozen states and numerous local and regional governments have instituted policies that resemble defining characteristics of smart growth. A number of state and local governments have all but rejected smart growth, however, due in large part to disagreements involving ways to implement comprehensive land use public policies. This article explores state and local-level responses to urban sprawl by looking to smart growth as a policy alternative. It traces the origins of smart growth and provides a comprehensive overview of current-day smart growth practices. Finally, the article concludes by highlighting current smart growth initiatives and offers a critique of future smart growth endeavors.

Before proceeding, the reader should be aware of the following caveats. First, this article does not advocate or offer normative judgments about the merits, desirability, or necessity of smart growth. Although it is certainly true that smart growth has gained widespread attention—acclaim in some circles, disdain in others—it is also a topic of considerable debate. This discussion does not provide an indepth analysis on the nature or nuances of sprawl nor does it devote too much attention to the negative-versus-positive consequences of sprawl. Finally, the article acknowledges that smart growth is controversial, in part, because little consensus has been reached regarding the impact of smart growth in terms of its effectiveness in achieving the broader goal of stopping sprawl or addressing other issues of importance, such as housing, transportation, or environmental justice. Although advocates are now beginning to focus their efforts on issues other than the environment, there is no explicit response to other sprawl conditions that are unrelated to the environment, such as the housing affordability crisis or inefficient transportation systems.

The reader should also be aware that, although smart growth has made great strides in terms of reaching a broad range of constituencies and creating consensus-building coalitions around smart growth objectives, little agreement has been reached regarding what smart growth is and how to define it, and disagreement abounds over how to identify its general physical characteristics. Though we can be sure that smart growth exists and has caught on well within the urban planning and environmental communities, the greater challenge for researchers interested in smart growth is being able to identify and classify existing smart growth policies across the board. This challenge may be met in large part through a clearer definition of what smart growth is and what it is not.

With these objectives and caveats in mind, this article is divided into three sections. The first covers the general, historical developments in land use planning and then presents a more indepth discussion on the evolution of smart growth. The second section provides a narrative on the

origin and evolution of the smart growth movement in the United States and a progress report on present-day smart growth practices. Finally, the article concludes by offering a preview of what is likely to come in the next few years as state and local governments and regional planning entities continue to consider smart growth policies.

The Historical Underpinnings of Growth Management Systems in the United States

The history of growth management and land use planning generally reflects a tug of war between local governments and their state government counterparts about how best to address problems that often stem from accelerated population growth. At issue is ascertaining which level of government is best suited for making these most critical planning decisions that will affect the lives of ordinary citizens. In the earliest part of the nation's history, growth management decisions came directly from local government units, such as townships and other smaller government entities. Growth-related conditions and problems, however, spilled over into nearby jurisdictions, and fragmented and uncoordinated efforts made it nearly impossible to have a coherent land use policy that sufficiently addressed these issues. State governments recognized these uncoordinated activities and began to consider measures that would assist local governments streamlining the planning process.

State land use planning dates as far back as the 1920s when then-Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, spearheaded the enactment of the landmark Standard City Planning Enabling Act and Standard State Zoning Enabling Act (Levin, Rose, and Slavet 1974; American Planning Association, 2002a). The primary purpose of these model acts was to protect private property at the local level but also to help local governments advance their growth management objectives. The prevailing notion was that local governments are, and should remain, the primary decisionmakers of land use policies and that states should assume a less central role in the planning process. In addition, the acts determined that local governments would remain responsible for enforcing local zoning ordinances.

Before the enabling acts, states had attempted to preempt the zoning powers of local governments. The argument for enhanced state involvement in growth and planning decisions was that local governments were ineffective at managing growth due to fragmented city and county governments with diffuse enforcement powers. As a result, states issued three main objectives for state intervention in land use control. First, states would implement regulatory statutes that established clearly defined objectives and administrative roles for statewide comprehensive planning. Second, land use decisions would be devoid of provisions that invoke controversy or place unfair burdens on builders or consumers. Finally, after regulations were established, the land would regulate itself unless a need arose for further regulatory controls (Levin, Rose, and Slavet 1974).

In 1925, New Jersey, Vermont, and Wisconsin began to implement planning strategies at the state level (Linowes and Allensworth 1975). By 1934, 36 states established planning boards, commissions, and other minor regulatory agencies. By 1936, all states except Delaware had instituted full-time, specialized state planning agencies. These state planning agencies were central gatekeepers of land use decisions. They also had political advantages, having close ties to governors, legisla-

tive committees, and special interest groups. In most states, the governor appointed heads of the planning commission and controlled the budget. State assemblies provided the legislative mandate and could delegate specific administrative tasks to various agencies. Special interest groups were equipped with specialized information about how the planning and zoning process worked. By and large, however, states failed to achieve their regulatory objectives under the enabling acts because of local government claims to autonomy and home-rule constitutional powers.

Centralized planning by the states became unpopular and disagreement arose over the jurisdictional responsibilities of local regulatory agencies. Localities were more concerned with increasing their tax base, and attempts by higher levels of government to incorporate land use controls were futile, especially if no financial incentive (or penalty) was in place to encourage the local agencies to comply. Local governments feared that publicly owned land would depress land values and discourage potential industries from investing in the economy. By the end of the 1930s, all attempts at comprehensive planning at the state level failed and those functions devolved to the local governments.

In the 1940s and 1950s, urban revitalization movements took center stage as a response to the Great Depression and the Second World War. Postwar advancements in information and technology required a skilled labor force. The emergence of the automobile led to the expansion of highways and mass transit systems. In response to booming populations, there was a corresponding increase in demand for housing. These economic and social conditions attracted and lured investors and workforce employers to the suburbs and away from central cities, where the prospects of job creation, land for residential and commercial construction, and lucrative corporate enterprises were greatest. Urban areas, by contrast, were losing manufacturing jobs and higher skilled employment opportunities to these new suburban promise lands. By the 1960s, the federal government began to take notice.

The federal government appropriated funding in the form of community development grants and, to tackle the ills of urban America, undertook a host of experiments geared toward improvements in housing and transportation. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Transportation were created, and preserving open space, improving transit systems, fulfilling critical housing needs, and ensuring better public facilities became primary goals. States assumed little responsibility in these policy areas (Levin, Rose, and Slavet 1974).

In the 1970s, state-level planning activities were still limited to just that—planning and nothing else—while local governments' primary responsibility was zoning. The federal government continued its presence by taking a direct role in enforcing clean air and water standards. A few states, such as Hawaii and Vermont, were successful at direct state planning and zoning responsibilities (American Planning Association 2000). By 1974, Hawaii and Vermont, along with Maine, Florida, and Oregon, had mapped out plans for comprehensive state land use policies. Mapping and geographic systems were created to identify areas for growth management. That same year, Congress passed the Land Use Planning Act of 1974, which provided grants to states to assist local governments with planning efforts (Burchell, Listokin, and Galley 2000; Linowes and Allensworth 1975).

Local governments had already established independent planning commissions that oversaw the growth management process. The efforts by these independent agencies constituted a separate political enterprise from housing, transportation, and environmental administrative processes. These agencies, however, also had a say in the area of land use planning. How the states would

deal with these complex jurisdictional issues was unclear. Hawaii was one of only a few states where state centralized control worked. The success of comprehensive planning in Hawaii was due to fragmented and weak local government enforcement and policing powers. Moreover, there was no contention between various constituencies and stakeholders, such as rural versus urban or public versus private ownership. Farmers were not a strong political force in Hawaii and private ownership was not widespread (Linowes and Allensworth 1975).

As metropolitan areas continued to experience rapid growth, families relocated to outer-ring suburbs to escape the hustle and bustle of sprawling central cities. Cars made it easier for those who could afford them to literally buy into the American Dream. That dream was not realized in congested, urban cities; it was a dream that could be achieved only in the suburban communities, where land was plentiful and cheap. As socially mobile families continued to migrate to suburban enclaves, businesses and industry followed. Construction development also leaped to the suburbs. Urban areas became stricken with poverty, homelessness, and substandard schools. Growth declined in urban centers but accelerated in suburbia, producing many undesirable economic and social conditions in suburban areas such as traffic congestion and overcrowded schools.

By the 1980s, states began to realize that problems related to sprawl spilled over into other jurisdictions as a direct consequence of leapfrog or excessive outward development. Florida, with its 1985 historic land use planning statutes, made some of the first attempts at reforming growth management at the state level. The emphasis of the Florida statutes was to protect open land from encroaching development, particularly along the coast and environmentally sensitive areas (American Planning Association 2002a). By the end of the decade, other states, including New Jersey, saw a need for either direct intervention or more centralized control. Some advocates called for smart growth-oriented policies that incorporated comprehensive strategies to address a host of environmental and land use development concerns.

The Emergence of the Smart Growth Movement

Smart growth is an elusive term, and, yet, the concept has generated thoughtful discussions and debates within policymaking circles. Initially, the movement began primarily with conservationists motivated by a desire to address environmental hazards that they attributed to excessive development and sprawl. Today, smart growth has become associated with many different constituencies that have advanced their own agendas based on their interpretations of what smart growth is. While disagreements linger, the basic idea of smart growth is to deter development away from communities that are experiencing the most detrimental impacts of sprawl and to target those areas in most need of infrastructure improvements. Smart growth encourages more compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly designs and emphasizes high-density rather than low-density development. Strict emphasis is placed on more efficient transit systems with less reliance on the automobile as the primary mode of transportation.

As Americans begin to take notice of the social and economic costs of sprawl, state governments are responding by putting forth aggressive campaigns aimed at reducing sprawl-induced conditions. One strategy involves containing growth in areas where development has been excessive and redirecting valuable resources to areas of greatest need, particularly in cities and older suburbs. For many smart growth advocates, this strategy describes what smart growth is all about.

According to many supporters, smart growth seeks to address sprawl-related problems by slowing growth in outer-ring urban, suburban, or rural areas. Smart growth advocates have developed a set of policy elements in response to interrelated conditions that affect the lives of everyday citizens, which they believe sprawl has caused, such as traffic congestion (see exhibit A-1 in the appendix). Supporters generally agree that the purpose of smart growth is to limit outward expansion of development where sprawl or low-density development is rampant (Downs 2001; Knaap 2003). They tend to agree that the goal of any smart growth policy should focus on land preservation and open space protection, farmland and wetlands, and other natural resources (see exhibit A-2 in the appendix). Finally, supporters argue that any development that is "smart" should be in the form of mixed land uses and higher densities and should offer citizens a wide variety of amenities that are easily accessible (for example, parks, town centers, and biking trails).

Advocates view successful smart growth policies as those that encourage a variety of transportation choices that lessen the dependence on the automobile. Perhaps the most controversial smart growth concept is that the costs of construction projects that have the effect of intensifying sprawl conditions ought to be placed on industries that build in sprawling areas and should not be borne by citizens. The implication of the proposal is that governments ought to pass smart growth policies that place limitations for construction projects that induce or worsen sprawl conditions. Thus the politics of smart growth has created two opposing camps. On one side, antigrowth or slow-growth interests support many smart growth strategies that specifically target sprawling communities by placing caps on land development in those areas. These constituencies consist primarily of environmentalists, urban planners, some farming groups, and politically active suburban residents who blame sprawl for traffic congestion and other ills that plague their neighborhoods. In the other camp are progrowth constituencies and many homebuilding and developer stakeholders who are suspicious that smart growth practices involve heightened restrictions on construction through increased regulations and unwanted government intervention. These stakeholders also tend to be skeptical that smart growth policies merely constitute a prescriptive approach to sprawl that may not be solved in a comprehensive fashion but are adequately addressed through market strategies that focus on incentives for building in depressed areas.

In the mid-1990s, the smart growth concept was first introduced by the American Planning Association (APA), the Environmental Protection Agency, the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), and the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) (Burchell, Listokin, and Galley 2000). The first smart growth alliance was charged with encouraging states to pass growth management laws that promoted open space preservation, improved transportation systems, and protected critically designated environmental areas. Resulting from this collaboration of diverse stakeholders, all having a vested interest in better growth management practices by state and local governments, came *Growing Smart*, a guidebook that helps officials design comprehensive plans that arm them with the necessary policy tools for reducing sprawl. The second coalition, formed by NRDC and STPP, sponsored a smart growth toolkit that provides a comprehensive list of proposals for public officials, planners, and builders to use to address each negative aspect of sprawl, including traffic congestion, poor air and water quality, inadequate or dilapidated housing, and decaying building structures and brownfield development (Ibid).

In 1997, Maryland became the first state to establish a smart growth program. The cornerstone of its smart growth plan places limitations on new construction in communities most affected by sprawl and redirects valuable resources to areas in greatest need of new infrastructure projects. In addition, the hallmark of the smart growth program focuses on the rehabilitation of existing structures, incorporating revitalization strategies that are cost effective.[1] Other states followed suit—Rhode Island, Colorado, and New Jersey with its landmark New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Program. In 1999, smart growth met with increased public attention, awareness, and interest and received major news magazine coverage. The states of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, among others, were acknowledged for their leadership in brownfield redevelopment, and Georgia was heralded as a pioneer in the area of smart growth in transportation. By the end of the decade, nearly 20 states followed with their own smart growth laws. States incorporated innovative strategies to combat sprawl (for example, urban growth boundaries, transfer of developers' rights, multimodal transportation systems, incentive-based reward systems to discourage leapfrog development in suburban areas, and mixed-used residential and commercial development).[2] In sum, while the original concept of smart growth is not novel, what is innovative about smart growth is this integrated approach to growth management, in which the planning process fuses policies that address sprawl-related problems in a variety of policy domains, such as transportation, housing, urban renewal, and the environment.

At the federal level in the 1990s, the Senate took up the smart growth issue, and President William Clinton and Vice President Albert Gore promoted their "Livable Agenda," which highlighted various aspects of smart growth policies (APA 2000). In this new, innovative approach to growth management, planning that was not solely focused on local zoning powers was the primary focus. Planning strategies, instead, took cues from the new urbanism movement, which approaches the reduction of sprawl by focusing on types of development in residential neighborhoods (Downs 2001).

New urbanists argued for more compact forms of development, such as townhouses rather than detached, single-family homes. This approach is now modified to incorporate mixed-use development with a variety of densities that pertain not just to residential development but also to commercial development. New urbanists contend that housing and public amenities should be easily accessible and closely located. This "smarter" mode of growth management, they argue, would lessen the impact of sprawl by cutting down commute times, save energy by reducing the reliance on cars, encourage social interaction, and reduce air pollution—all the while conserving valuable land resources. The initial focus on the new urbanism dimension of smart growth led many to believe that smart growth was not really comprehensive or multifaceted. Most advocates agree that smart growth should focus on future challenges to sprawl. The objective is not to stop growth completely but to deter sprawl by making better use of existing infrastructure and to target future development to areas that have the greatest need.

Smart Growth Today: An Assessment

In recent years, a broad coalition of supporters has come to view the smart growth movement as the preferred policy solution to sprawl. Since 1997, 20 states have either considered or fully adopted comprehensive growth management plans. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),

which evaluates and recognizes local and regional smart growth best practices, has given high marks and awards to the Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development (OCD), which administers state-funded programs that foster new urbanist ideals of compact development and walkable communities. The cornerstone of the state's OCD programs is its financial incentive package for builders to encourage them to participate in urban renewal programs and create mixed-use design that is also accessible to transit centers and other valuable amenities.

In Kansas, the city of Wichita has upgraded its smart growth program to include new, bold initiatives to redevelop its older suburban enclaves. Focusing on fostering partnerships with local for-profit entities, Wichita has transformed several old, decaying residential and commercial structures through infill development. As many of these local programs do, the program in Wichita offers generous incentive packages to local construction companies to help promote redevelopment efforts. Wichita has also won smart growth EPA awards for its commitment to smart growth principles.

Many examples of smart growth projects also exist at the regional level. The most notable of these is the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a diverse group of developers, civic associations, urban planners, and environmental organizations, which operates in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The mission of the coalition is to address problems stemming from the rapidly growing and developing regions around Washington, D.C. A targeted focus is on the fastest growing metropolitan areas in Virginia and Maryland, specifically Loudon and Fairfax Counties in Virginia and Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland. The Coalition for Smarter Growth has been fairly successful at promoting regionally based smart growth efforts, particularly those related to transit. Because traffic congestion is a major problem in the Washington metropolitan area, the organization has developed strategies to promote new policy tools that support transportation choices; for example, instituting a car-sharing program.[3]

Other notable examples of regional smart growth efforts have taken place in Delaware and Idaho. The Delaware Valley Smart Growth Alliance (DVSGA) is composed of nonprofit and for-profit organizations, citizens groups, and governing officials from Delaware, the greater Philadelphia area, and Trenton, New Jersey. The DVSGA promotes smart growth by encouraging construction projects and other proconservation efforts by providing grant opportunities to local construction companies that direct residential and renewal projects to declining neighborhoods in urban areas. Idaho Smart Growth (ISG) focuses on redevelopment projects in Treasure Valley, an older suburban community outside the Boise city corridor. Relying on infill development strategies, ISG works with community development leaders to implement renewal programs.[4]

Smart Growth at the State Level

Many smart growth policy ideas are conceived at the state level, generally with state executive agencies directing planning and land use regulations at the local and municipal levels. Legislative actions undertaken by state legislatures have guided smart growth-related public policies as well. Exhibit 1 provides an overview of state land use policies currently in existence. Note that these states have instituted policies that contain some smart growth characteristics that are not necessarily described explicitly as smart growth.

Exhibit 1

State Actions or Programs in Support of Smart Growth Goals

State	Year	Title	Law
Florida	1972	Environmental Land and Water Management Act	Fla. Stat. 380 et seq.
	1984–85	Omnibus Growth Management Act	
	1998–99	Criteria for land use plans, infill development	
Hawaii	1961	Hawaii Land Use Law	Hawaii Rev. Stats Ch. 205
	1978	Hawaii State Plan	Act 100
Oregon	1973	Land Conservation and Development Act	S.B. 100, Oregon Stats. 197
Vermont	1970	Environmental Control Act	Act 250, 10 Vermont Stats. 151
	1988	Growth Management Act	Act 200, 24 Vermont Stats. 117
	1990	Amendments to Ch. 117	Act 280
Maine	1988	Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act	30 M.R.S.A. Sec. 4960
Washington	1990	Growth Management Act	Sub. House Bill 2929
	1991	Amendments to 1990 Growth Management Act	H.B. 1025
New Jersey	1985	State Planning Act	NJSA 52-18A-196 et seq.
	1999	Smart Growth Planning Grants	
	2001	State Development and Redevelopment Plan	
	2005	Smart Growth Tax Credit Act	A.B. 1356
Georgia	1989	Coordinated Planning Legislation	O.C.G.A. 50-8-1 et seq.
	1992	Amendments to Planning Law	
Rhode Island	1988	Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act	Rhode Island General Laws, Ch. 45-22
	2000	Referenda on developer rights, open space	
Maryland	1992	Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act	
	1997	Smart Growth Areas Act	
	2001	GreenPrint Program	H.B. 1379
Arizona	1998	Growing Smarter Act, transfer development rights act	S. 1238, Ch. 145
	2000	Growing Smarter Plus Act	
New Hampshire	2000	Smart Growth Bill	H.B. 1259
Pennsylvania	2000	Growth Area Legislation, transfer development rights	H.B. 14 (Act 67); S.B. 300 (Act 68)
Tennessee	1998	Growth Policy Law	Public Chapter 1101
Wisconsin	1999	Growth Management Law	A.B. 133
	2005	Smart Growth	S.B. 375

Exhibit 1

State Actions or Programs in Support of Smart Growth Goals (continued)

State	Year	Title	Law
Delaware	2001	Comprehensive Plans and Annexation Law	H.B. 255
		Planning Coordination	S.B. 105
		Graduated Impact Fees	H.B. 235
		Reality Transfer Tax for Conservation Trust Fund	H.B. 192
Louisiana	2004	Neighborhood Enhancement Program	H.B. 1720

Sources: American Planning Association, 2002a; Sellers, 2003; Bollens, 1992; National Conference of State Legislatures' Growth Management Legislative Database

The most recent smart growth activity at the state level is Louisiana's Smart Growth Neighborhood Enhancement Program, administered by the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. In response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster, this program focuses almost entirely on neighborhood revitalization, particularly for those areas around urban Main Street business districts. The premise of the program is to promote a "live near your work" strategy that addresses the spatial mismatch between job centers and housing.

Also recently enacted is Wisconsin's Smart Growth bill, S.B. 375, which requires local municipalities to approve only those construction or infrastructure funding projects that comply with communitywide comprehensive plans. The bill specifically targets zoning ordinances that mandate lot sizes and design requirements for single-family, detached housing. In addition, the bill encourages the use of impact fees to reduce excessive development in existing sprawling or fast-growing communities.

A number of state legislative actions are currently being considered; some are pending and others have failed. In Connecticut, property tax advocates celebrated the enactment of H.B. 6044, which establishes a study commission to assess the impact of property taxes on land conservation. In California, however, Smart Growth bill A.B. 463, which would have required a more pedestrian-friendly design to be included in comprehensive plans that use state transportation funds, was soundly rejected. Smart growth advocates in Massachusetts also experienced a setback in the legislature when the assembly rejected density bonuses, which would have awarded home builders for incorporating smart growth strategies, such as cluster zoning and the transfer of developer rights, into their projects. Finally, in New York and Michigan, legislation to provide tax credits for local construction entities that promote more mixed-use, compact development designs is pending.[5]

Smart Growth for the Future: Looking Ahead

The leading proponents of the smart growth movement can thank the American public for their support at the polls. During the midterm elections of 2006, voters elected or reelected leaders who are vocally supportive of smart growth efforts. Voter discontent with sprawl has helped to propel smart growth to the top of the governmental agenda (see exhibits A-3 through A-5 in the Appendix).

Reelected in Arizona, Governor Janet Napolitano continued the state's famed Growing Smarter enterprise that was implemented by her predecessor, Jane Hull, in 1998. Napolitano pledged to carry out former Governor Hull's legacy to strengthen open space preservation laws. Connecticut reelected Governor Jodi Rell, who instituted an executive agency, Office for Responsible Growth, to help administer her Livable Community agenda directed at urban renewal policies. In California, Proposition 84, which earmarks approximately $5 billion for coastline preservation and parks and recreation, was accepted by a majority of voters. California citizens also approved state bond measures that allocate millions in state funds for investments in transportation, housing, and infill development. The newly elected governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Tim Kaine, has recently promised that Virginia would become a leader of the smart growth movement; he is pushing to expand multimodal transportation and transit opportunities that will promote a variety of commuting choices for Virginians.[6] Finally, in Massachusetts, the outgoing governor, Mitt Romney, implemented the Commonwealth Capital Program to aid local governments in incorporating smart growth principles into their community master plans. Local governments are, in turn, rewarded with grants for other infrastructure projects that promote conservation and affordable housing efforts (Knox 2005).

With the success of recent proposals, smart growth supporters must recognize that they face formidable challenges. The movement has failed to offer smart growth as a viable and coherent solution. In other words, while there is some agreement about smart growth as a concept, there is no consensus about how smart growth policies create sound solutions to sprawl-related problems. For instance, smart growth has not yet provided a clear answer to the housing affordability problem and has not adequately addressed the charge that smart growth policies have the unintended consequence of raising housing prices. Smart growth has not sufficiently provided a solution to the notorious traffic conditions that exist in communities such as Fairfax County, Virginia, or Montgomery County, Maryland, which have instituted numerous local smart growth initiatives.

Smart growth has also often failed to convince public officials, builders, and other stakeholders on the best approach to implementation. A variety of smart growth formulas do exist and have been attempted; however, with no clear definition of what smart growth is and disagreements about how to proceed, the idea is often put forth without a coherent or unambiguous directive for how to implement the policy. With this shortcoming in mind, there is an emerging, highly organized countermovement that smart growth advocacy groups must contend with.

This countermovement argues that smart growth has attempted to hinder the market from functioning and prospering in a rapidly growing global economy (American Legislative Exchange Council, 2001; Staley, 2001a, 2001b). Opponents argue that smart growth fails to offer a coherent policy solution—that the reliance on a comprehensive approach to combating urban sprawl promises too much and overburdens local governments, and that smart growth does not allow the market to correct instances in which accelerated growth has created negative externalities. Developers contend that stringent or even moderate forms of land restrictions, primarily developers' fees, hinder them from building new subdivisions or single-family dwellings that consumers want, thus limiting profit. In essence, smart growth does not effectively deal with the concept of choice and how demand for housing will continue to stimulate growth. Smart growth, they assert, must deal with these realities and address them head on.

Concluding Remarks

The nascent but fast-growing smart growth movement has captured the attention of government officials, real estate developers and other private entities, environmentalists, urban planners, and many Americans. Of the 20 or so states that have adopted smart growth priorities, Maryland, Oregon, New Jersey, and Arizona have implemented some of the most innovative programs. A number of states that do not have smart growth programs, however, have co-opted some smart growth ideals. These ideals are certainly not new since most elements of smart growth, such as the incorporation of urban growth boundaries, have been around for decades. Nevertheless, the smart growth label has enjoyed broad appeal across the country. State legislatures have passed more than 400 growth-related ballot measures; many of them were concerned with implementing more efficient approaches to land use zoning ordinances, preserving popular tourist and historic attractions, protecting natural resources, and brownfield redevelopment. All these measures were adopted to address urban sprawl. Although more than half of the 50 states have not adopted state-level smart growth programs, the growth management ballot trend continues across the country, focusing mainly on local area growth issues.

At the federal level, President George W. Bush signed the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization and Environmental Restoration Act (S.B. 350), which provides liability protection for landowners and earmarks federal funds to preserve the Superfund program and $200 million for brownfield cleanup. Members of Congress have established a bipartisan alliance to protect open space and forestlands. For example, Maine Senator Susan Collins authored a bill to preserve forests threatened by encroaching development.[7] Virginia Representative Virgil Goode introduced the Tax Credits for Conservation Act (H.R. 1607), and the late Georgia Senator, Paul Coverdell, introduced the Homestead Open Space Preservation and Conservation Act (H.R. 2036). Both measures passed overwhelmingly, providing tax credits for qualified conservation expenditures.[8]

In sum, smart growth has received harsh criticism for two main reasons. First, there is no universal definition for smart growth. To urban planners, smart growth means one thing, but to conservationists, it means something different. In a general sense, smart growth as a catchall phrase that has been used to describe a growth management policy that incorporates comprehensive planning and state and locally imposed sanctions against developers who build in sprawling communities. According to supporters, the goals of smart growth are to contain sprawl by limiting excessive development in low-density suburbs and by redirecting construction projects to designated urban and suburban areas that are in greatest need of capital or infrastructure improvements. Opponents charge that smart growth is really an attempt on behalf of advocates to involve government in market affairs. To them, smart growth really means “no growth.”

Over the past several years, supporters and opponents have debated back and forth over this highly charged political issue. In some instances, advocates have won; in many others, smart growth opponents have enjoyed success and have continued to gain the advantage. Whoever wins or loses the debate, however, largely depends on the political, social, and economic context in which these players find themselves.

The success of smart growth in the future cannot be predicted, but one can safely assume that the current trend of state and local governments looking for sprawl-busting solutions will continue. Although smart growth has taken a back seat to other issues currently being debated in state legislatures, its advocates have not given up hope. Former Maryland governor and architect of one of the first smart growth programs, Parris Glendening, is now the head of the Smart Growth Leadership Institute in Washington, D.C., a nonprofit organization committed to advancing the smart growth agenda throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Glendening continues to put forth smart growth ideas and strategies at speaking engagements across the country, and he often appears before the APA and the National Governor's Association, another organization he once headed. His goal is to speak to state and local officials, urban planners, corporate entities, and others on how to promote the smart growth agenda, dispel misgivings about smart growth, and offer technical assistance to states and localities on implementing growth reforms.

Other administrative officials from the Glendening administration have also become prominent figures in the smart growth movement, including former Maryland Planning Department head, Harriet Tregoning, who until recently presided over Smart Growth America, which is responsible for marketing smart growth ideals to urban planners and other important stakeholders throughout the country. Finally, Maryland has continued smart growth efforts, even in the face of economic hardships. The University of Maryland at College Park established its National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education in 2002 to tackle regional growth issues across the state. The center continues its research efforts and produces widely-cited publications on planning and growth management issues.

Smart growth research and development efforts continue across the country, albeit sporadically. Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm has recently teamed with Republican counterparts from the previous state administration to establish the Land Use Leadership Council to investigate the effect of land use patterns on sprawl. Newly elected governors in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Tennessee continue to push for smart growth in their respective states. But smart growth enthusiasts still have a long way to go to convince the broader decisionmaking public that smart growth could offer the solution to the pervasive problem of urban sprawl. That challenge continues even in the face of a staunchly aggressive countermovement that is just as committed, if not more so, to the goal of stopping smart growth in its tracks.

Appendix

It is generally accepted that smart growth programs contain some or all of the following policy elements described in exhibit A-1. These policy elements all target urban sprawl.

Exhibit A–1

Smart Growth Policy Elements

Policy element 1	Preserve open space (farmland, historical, or cultural resources)
Policy element 2	Environmental protection/conservation of natural resources (water, air, energy, wildlife, habitat, etc.)
Policy element 3	Developing infill sites/brownfield redevelopment
Policy element 4	New urban designs (pedestrian-friendly architecture)
Policy element 5	Include citizens in land use decisionmaking ventures/consensus-building strategies
Policy element 6	Provision for creating widespread affordable housing
Policy element 7	Encourage regional governing solutions to urban/suburban sprawl (e.g., tax-base revenue sharing)
Policy element 8	Reduce automobile dependence by increasing emphasis on mass transit/light rail systems
Policy element 9	Promote compact, high-density or mixed-use development
Policy element 10	Create fiscal incentive structure to encourage cooperation from local/regional governments and planning organizations
Policy element 11	Impose the social costs of new development onto real estate developers (cost of new infrastructure, environmental, developer fees, impact fees, urban growth boundaries, etc.)

Sources: American Planning Association (2002a); Downs (2001); Florida Department of Community Affairs (2000); Hirschhorn (2000; 2002b); Myers and Puentes (2001)

Exhibit A–2

Making the Connection Between Sprawl and Smart Growth, 2002–2005

Sprawl Feature	Smart Growth Remedy	Land Use Control Strategy	State Examples
Low-density, widely dispersed development	Higher density residential and commercial development	Restrictions on runaway development; impact fees; urban growth boundaries	OR, WA
Urban blight	Infill development; urban service areas	Brownfield redevelopment in existing sprawling location; rehab codes	PA, NJ, CT, MI, ME
Homogenous, nonmixed residential/commercial development	Compact, mixed-used planning designs (high and low-density, pedestrian friendly)	Both single-family and multifamily housing development; mixed commercial and public facility developments with accessible designs	IL, MA, CO
	Multimodal transit systems	Light rail systems	MD, WA, OR
Accelerated development	Open space protection; historic site preservation	Transfer of development rights; coordinated zoning ordinances	MD, NJ, TN
Excessive development in critical areas	Conservation easements	Priority funding areas; smart codes; possibly tax increment financing (CA)	MD, NJ, NH
Poor air and water quality; soil erosion	Environmental standards	Designated critical areas barring development	NJ, MD, FL, CA
Unaffordable housing	Technical assistance to local governments; housing located near job centers	Local zoning review for ordinances that prescribe land uses; density restrictions; minimum lot size requirements; building code requirements modifications	PA, NJ, ME, MN, RI

Sources: Smart Growth America (2004b); Smart Growth News, 2003–2005, www.smartgrowthnetwork.org; Sellers (2003)

Exhibit A–3

Ten-Year Assessment of Smart Growth: LandVote Database Measure Summary 1994–2006

Year	Number of Measures	Number of Measures Passed	Total Funds Approved ($ in billions)	Land Conservation Funds Approved ($ in billions)
1994	43	30	$1.0	$0.6
1995	38	29	$1.2	$1.1
1996	93	73	$5.4	$1.2
1997	70	57	$2.4	$0.6
1998	184	150	$7.9	$6.4
1999	105	93	$2.5	$2.2
2000	212	175	$11.5	$4.8
2001	199	139	$1.9	$1.6
2002	194	143	$8.7	$5.5
2003	133	99	$1.7	$1.2
2004	219	164	$2.6	$4.1
2005	140	111	$2.7	$1.2
2006	180	134	$2.7	$6.8
Total	**1,810**	**1,397**	**$75.8**	**$37.3**

Source: The Trust for Public Land, Conservation Finance Program LandVote Database, 1994–2006

Exhibit A–4

Ten-Year Assessment of Smart Growth: LandVote Database Measure Summary, 1997–2006, by Finance Mechanisms

Finance Mechanisms	Number of Mechanisms	Number of Measures Passed	Total Funds Approved ($ in billions)	Conservation Funds Approved ($ in billions)
Property tax	502	364	$4.4	$3.3
Bond	385	324	$23.2	$13.7
Sales tax	88	62	$27.9	$4.1
Other	60	49	$2.6	$2.3
Income tax	35	28	$0.2	$0.1
Total	**1,070**	**827**	**$58.3**	**$23.5**

Source: The Trust for Public Land, Conservation Finance Program LandVote Database, 1994–2006

Exhibit A–5

Ten-Year Assessment of Smart Growth: LandVote Database Measure Summary, 1997–2006, by Jurisdiction Type

Jurisdiction Type	Number of Mechanisms	Number of Measures Passed	Total Funds Approved ($ in billions)	Conservation Funds Approved ($ in billions)
State	27	25	$16.8	$10.5
County	189	148	$31.3	$7.7
Municipal	814	631	$9.9	$5.0
Special district	40	23	$0.3	$0.3
Total	**1,070**	**827**	**$58.3**	**$23.5**

Source: The Trust for Public Land, Conservation Finance Program LandVote Database, 1994–2006

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Notes

1. Backed by a powerful legislature, urban planners, environmentalists, and many in the construction and real estate industry, Maryland's landmark Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Act was signed into law on October 1, 1998. The five main pillars of the Maryland smart growth initiative are (1) the Smart Growth Priority Funding Areas Act of 1997, (2) the Rural Legacy program, (3) the Brownfields Voluntary Cleanup and Revitalization Incentive Program, (4) Job Creation Tax Credits, and (5) Live Near Your Work. Maryland's smart growth initiatives are centered around three core objectives: (1) to save valuable natural resources, (2) to support existing communities and neighborhoods by targeting state resources to support development in areas where the infrastructure is already in place, and (3) to prevent sprawl by redirecting state funds to encourage development projects where there is greatest need.
2. Goode, Collaton, and Bartsch (2001) and the American Planning Association's (2002a) updated *State of the States* handbook give an overview of each state's history of growth management laws.
3. Washington, D.C.'s District Department of Transportation has recently teamed with transportation officials and planning communities in Virginia to establish the Zipcar and Flexcar programs to help relieve problems associated with inadequate parking and traffic congestion in the region. Residents can rent cars at designated Metrorail stations and other locations. Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, also have car-sharing programs that serve as alternatives to the time-consuming and financial burdens of car ownership. See the Coalition for Smarter Growth website, http://www.smartergrowth.net, for more information on car-sharing programs and their relation to smart growth principles.
4. For more information, see Idaho smart growth news website, http://www.idahosmartgrowth.org/projects/transportation/index.htm.
5. All current smart growth activity at the state level can be accessed through the National Conference of State Legislatures' Growth Management Legislation Database, which is updated frequently at http://www.ncsl.org/programs/natres/growthmgt.htm.

6. See State of the State address to the Virginia State General Assembly, September 22, 2006, "A Second Opportunity to Move Forward on Transportation." The entire address to the Joint Assembly can be accessed at http://www.governor.virginia.gov/AboutTheGovernor/FromTheGovernorsDesk/AnotherTranspoOpp.cfm.

7. S.B. 1208, FY 2004.

8. For a complete discussion, see Northeast-Midwest Institute's website, http://www.nemw.org/index.html.

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