

SMART GROWTH WHITE PAPER **Sustainable Land Use Workgroup** **February 20, 2003**

I. Definition of Topic

Smart Growth is the development of land and buildings that serve the economy, the community, and the environment.¹ Smart Growth can provide the benefits of growth without degrading the environment, raising local taxes, increasing traffic congestion, or busting budgets.² It is finding ways to create public-private partnerships to define regional and local smart growth priorities and initiatives, support implementation, and develop sustainable communities. Smart Growth is building places people want to live in for what they are, rather than for what they are not.³

II. Historical Attributes

Communities are starting to question the growth patterns of the last 50 years. Urban areas have changed from neighborhood centered communities with retail services and work within walking distance, or a short trolley ride, to exurban communities where automobile transportation is a necessity. The evolving change to a global economy and to a North American information-based economy has resulted in a decline of manufacturing activities near urban centers, and urban sprawl. Further, the motivation for relocation rather than re-investment with modern technologies at existing sites can be attributable to labor costs, taxation, crime, schools, improved access to transportation and various incentives. The restructuring of the economy has resulted in urban sprawl and a surplus of industrial manufacturing locations characterized as brownfields (insert link to urban land white paper). Conversely, historical growth patterns suggest that the middle class desires sprawl, and that long before interstate highway systems Americans were migrating from the city to the countryside.

Sprawl is a development pattern characterized by scattered, unplanned, low-density development that is not functionally related to adjacent land uses. The primary concern about sprawl development is cost.⁴ This includes the economic costs of abandoning infrastructure in the city to rebuild further out, and the social costs of new employment located in the suburbs and the available workforce in the city. (insert link to Preservation of Green Space white paper). Direct environmental costs of current development patterns include habitat loss and fragmentation, and degradation of water resources⁵.

III. Aspects Relating to Southeastern Michigan

The need for smart growth in southeast Michigan can be easily demonstrated by two elements, the decay

1 "What is Smart Growth?," EPA 231-F-01-001A, April 2001.

2 Why Smart Growth: A Primer, International City/County Management Association with Geoff Anderson, 19.

3 Why Smart Growth: A Primer, p. 31.

4 "A National Perspective on Land Use Policy Alternatives and Consequences," Robert W. Burchell, Ph.D., and Naveed A. Shad, MCRP, September 22, 1998.

5 Our Built and Natural Environments, EPA 231-R-01-002, January 2001

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of the neighborhoods in east and southwest Detroit, Hamtramck, and Highland Park, (insert link to case study) and I-96 east bound at 7:30 a.m. in Oakland County, repeated again at 5:00 p.m. westbound. Have you ever been on I-696 at the wrong time of day? Wayne County has practically no open space left, except for Detroit Metropolitan Airport, and main roads such as Michigan Avenue, Telegraph Road, and Woodward Avenue are one long strip development from downtown Detroit to the Wayne County border. Yet, abandoned, underutilized, and vacant commercial and industrial buildings can be found throughout Southeast Michigan. Further, in the urban core communities the loss of jobs and local tax base have resulted in blight and poverty creating a loss of sustainable communities and an increase in vacant lots, abandoned homes, and crime. Traditional urban development that was once characterized by high population densities, community re-investment, and more efficient city services has virtually disappeared.

Another indicator of the sprawl taking place in southeast Michigan is a 30year sewer needs study completed by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) in 2001.⁶ This study indicates that \$14-26 billion needs to be invested in the sewer system and more than 5,000 miles of new sewers constructed. The study recognizes that these costs can be reduced by “collaboration by infrastructure providers to maximize use of existing sewer infrastructure” and “innovative designs for development (that can) reduce demand for building sewer infrastructure as well as operating and maintaining that new infrastructure.” In addition, the outlying counties will spend 50% or more of the funding needed for sewers on new sewer construction. The construction of new strip developments, shopping malls, and low density subdivisions exacerbate these conditions and leave local governments searching for adequate income to support services and wondering what happened to the open, clean spaces that made the community so attractive in the first place (insert link to case study).

Michigan is a recognized leader in creating incentives for redevelopment, including cost-effective cleanup options, causation-based liability, liability protection for new owners, environmental grants and loans to local units of government, and job training. The use of these innovative federal, state, and local resources and redevelopment incentives will support smart growth initiatives and encourage new businesses to locate in Michigan’s urban centers (insert link to incentives).

On January 9, 2003, Governor Granholm and Republican leaders appointed former Republican Governor William G. Milliken and former Democratic state Attorney General Frank J. Kelley to co-chair a bipartisan commission on land use. The Michigan Land Use Leadership Council will recommend ways to solve sprawl, reduce government expenses, and improve the state’s economic competitiveness. Further, both Republican leaders and the governor are starting to see Smart Growth ideas playing a role in reducing government expenses. The panel’s 26 members include representatives of farm, business, civil rights, environmental, and local government groups (insert link).

6 “Investing in Southeast Michigan’s Quality of Life: Sewer Infrastructure Needs,” April 2001.

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IV. Discussion

Smart growth recognizes the many benefits of growth. It invests time, attention, and resources in restoring community and vitality to center cities and older suburbs. Smart growth in new developments is more town-centered, is transit and pedestrian oriented, and has a greater mix of housing, commercial and retail uses. It also preserves open space and other environmental amenities. Smart growth recognizes connections between development and quality of life.⁷ Smart growth is an approach to community and regional land use planning that emphasizes these principles:

Smart growth is community and regional land use planning that encourages:

- Mixed land uses
- Compact building design
- Housing opportunities and choices
- Walk able neighborhoods
- Distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Direct development towards exiting communities
- A variety of transportation choices
- Development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective
- Community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions
- Minimizing impacts to the environment
- Improved economic competitiveness
- Brownfield Incentives

Citizens and public officials must come to understand the relationships among land use, transportation, and the environment and begin to seek new ways to grow-ways that capture the benefits of protecting the environment, jobs, economic development, health, and quality of life. At the same time, the benefits of smart growth must be realized in a way that considers property rights and allows the free market to influence growth patterns.

In accordance with its mission statement, the sustainable land -use workgroup will continue to identify and promote awareness of sustainable practices and serve as a resource for all Forum members.

VI. Links to Topic Site or Related Papers

<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/index.htm>

<http://www.mlui.org/index.asp>

<http://www.nemw.org/smartgrowth.htm>

<http://www1.icma.org/main/topic.asp?tpid=8>

⁷ “What Is Smart Growth?” EPA.

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<http://www.smartgrowth.org/Default.asp?res=800>

<http://www.michigan.gov/deq>

<http://www.great-lakes.net/partners/solec/landuse>