

What is Smart Growth?

Smart Growth: it's a term that is used to support – and, incorrectly, oppose - many public and private projects. Of various excellent definitions out there, the AIA's "Livable Communities" concept is a good starting point:

1. Design on a Human Scale

Compact, pedestrian-friendly communities allow residents the chance to walk to shops, services, cultural events and venues, and jobs... and can reduce traffic congestion and benefit people's health.

2. Provide Choices

People want and need variety in housing, shopping, recreation, transportation, and employment. Variety creates lively neighborhoods and accommodates residents in different stages of their lives.

3. Encourage Mixed-Use Development

Integrating different land uses and varied building types – balancing places to live, work, and play across a spectrum of age and economic conditions – creates vibrant, diverse, and economically successful communities.

4. Preserve Urban Centers

Restoring, revitalizing, and infilling urban centers takes advantage of existing streets, services and buildings and avoids the need for new infrastructure. This helps to curb sprawl and promote stability for city neighborhoods.

5. Vary Transportation Options

Giving people the option of walking, biking and using public transit, in addition to driving – through better, more user-friendly public infrastructure – reduces traffic congestion, protects the environment and encourages physical activity.

6. Build Vibrant Public Spaces

Citizens need welcoming, well-defined public places to stimulate face-to-face interaction, collectively celebrate and mourn, encourage civic participation, admire public art and public performances, and gather for community events.

7. Create a Neighborhood Identity

A "sense of place" gives neighborhoods the unique character they deserve, enhances the walking environment, and creates pride in the community while providing physical and social connections to other neighborhoods.

8. Protect Environmental Resources

A well-designed balance of nature and development preserves natural systems, protects waterways from pollution, reduces air pollution, and protects property values. Open space, farms, and wildlife habitat are essential for environmental, recreational, and cultural reasons.

An existing Main Street...



w/simple building renovations...



w/street and utility improvements...



w/further private infill development...



...and street trees (© UrbanAdvantage).



Some call Smart Growth a Utopian ideal... opponents who feel it limits property rights often use less flattering terms. But Smart Growth is not about limits, but about one simple idea: **choices within good planning**. Cities grow, towns grow, neighborhoods grow. It's what is done with growth to enhance the regional quality of life and economic opportunities – and to provide real options in housing, transportation, jobs, and recreation – that lead to these very real benefits many different communities have enjoyed with thoughtful growth:



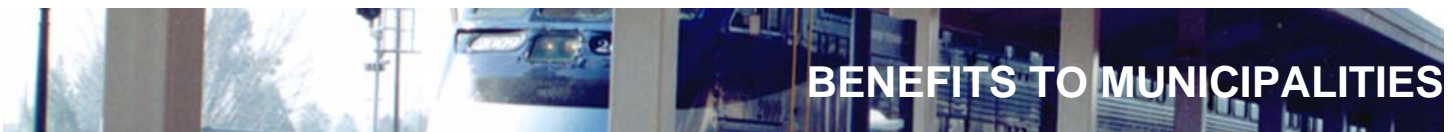
- Higher quality of life; higher, steadier property values
- Less traffic congestion & less driving... and less stress
- Chance to walk to main street retail & services
- More opportunities to get to know neighbors
- More independence for children, elderly, and the poor
- Efficient tax use w/less spent on utilities & roads



- Increased sales due to more foot traffic and time in area
- Better lifestyle with live/work unit potential – no commute
- Community involvement by knowing residents
- Smaller available spaces assist small business incubation



- More income potential from high density mixed-use units
- More lease-able square footage, more sales per sf
- Mix of commercial and residential saves parking cost
- Lower cost of utilities due to compact nature design
- Wider product range resulting in wider market share



- Stable, appreciating tax base due to greater density
- Less spent per capita on infrastructure and utilities
- Less crime and less spent on policing due to “eyes on street”
- Less sprawl when urban core area is desirable
- Better community image = Greater civic involvement = better governance

The Benefits of Smart Growth



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