

AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

POLICY GUIDE ON

SMART GROWTH

Adopted by Chapter Delegate Assembly, April 14, 2002

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Chicago, IL

ORGANIZATION OF THE POLICY GUIDE

This policy guide is divided into four sections.

- I. A motion to adopt a definition of Smart Growth, including a statement of Smart Growth principles.
- II. A description of the Smart Growth issue, including an historical overview.
- III. Specific policy motions in five categories:
 - A. Planning Structure, Process and Regulation
 - B. Transportation and Land Use
 - C. Regional Management and Fiscal Efficiency
 - D. Social Equity and Community Building
 - E. Environmental Protection and Land Conservation
- IV. A list of outcomes to help readers understand what will be achieved by implementing these policies.

I. MOTION TO ADOPT A DEFINITION OF SMART GROWTH

Smart growth means using comprehensive planning to guide, design, develop, revitalize and build communities for all that:

- **have a unique sense of community and place;**
- **preserve and enhance valuable natural and cultural resources;**
- **equitably distribute the costs and benefits of development;**
- **expand the range of transportation, employment and housing choices in a fiscally responsible manner;**
- **value long-range, regional considerations of sustainability over short term incremental geographically isolated actions; and**

- **promotes public health and healthy communities.**

Compact, transit accessible, pedestrian-oriented, mixed use development patterns and land reuse epitomize the application of the principles of smart growth.

In contrast to prevalent development practices, Smart Growth refocuses a larger share of regional growth within central cities, urbanized areas, inner suburbs, and areas that are already served by infrastructure. Smart Growth reduces the share of growth that occurs on newly urbanizing land, existing farmlands, and in environmentally sensitive areas. In areas with intense growth pressure, development in newly urbanizing areas should be planned and developed according to Smart Growth principles.

Core principles of Smart Growth include:

- A. **RECOGNITION THAT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, AND THE NON-PROFIT AND PRIVATE SECTORS, PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING POLICIES THAT SUPPORT SMART GROWTH.** Every level of government – federal, state, regional, county, and local -- should identify policies and practices that are inconsistent with Smart Growth and develop new policies and practices that support Smart Growth. Local governments have long been the principal stewards of land and infrastructure resources through implementation of land use policies. Smart Growth respects that tradition, yet recognizes the important roles that federal and state governments play as leaders and partners in advancing Smart Growth principles at the local level.
- B. **STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT URBAN INVESTMENT, COMPACT DEVELOPMENT, AND LAND CONSERVATION.** State and federal policies and programs have contributed to urban sprawl and need to be re-examined and replaced with policies and programs that support Smart Growth, including cost effective, incentive-based investment programs that target growth-related expenditures to locally-designated areas.
- C. **PLANNING PROCESSES AND REGULATIONS AT MULTIPLE LEVELS THAT PROMOTE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES.** All planning processes, as well as the distribution of resources, must be equitable. A diversity of voices must be included in community planning and implementation.
- D. **INCREASED CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE PLANNING PROCESS AND AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT.** Appropriate citizen participation ensures that planning outcomes are equitable and based on collective decision-making. Planning processes must involve comprehensive strategies that engage meaningful citizen participation and find common ground for decision-making.
- E. **A BALANCED, MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT PLANS FOR INCREASED TRANSPORTATION CHOICE.** Land use and transportation planning must be integrated to

accommodate the automobile and to provide increased transportation choices, such as mass transit, bicycles, and walking. Development must be pedestrian-friendly. All forms of transportation must be reliable, efficient and user-friendly, allowing full access by all segments of the population to housing, employment, education, and human and community services.

- F. **A REGIONAL VIEW OF COMMUNITY.** Smart Growth recognizes the interdependence of neighborhoods and municipalities in a metropolitan region and promotes balanced, integrated regional development achieved through regional planning processes.
- G. **ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL – A WIDE VARIETY OF APPROACHES TO ACCOMPLISH SMART GROWTH.** Customs, politics, laws, natural conditions, and other factors vary from state to state and from region to region. Each region must develop its own approach to problem solving and planning while involving the public, private and non-profit sectors. In some areas, this may require a significant change in perspective and culture, but such changes are necessary and beneficial in obtaining the results that Smart Growth aims to achieve.
- H. **EFFICIENT USE OF LAND AND INFRASTRUCTURE.** High-density development, infill development, redevelopment, and the adaptive re-use of existing buildings result in efficient utilization of land resources and more compact urban areas. Efficient use of public and private infrastructure starts with creating neighborhoods that maximize the use of existing infrastructure. In areas of new growth, roads, sewers, water lines, schools and other infrastructure should be planned as part of comprehensive growth and investment strategies. Regional cooperation is required for large infrastructure investments to avoid inefficiency and redundancy.
- I. **CENTRAL CITY VITALITY.** Every level of government should identify ways to reinvest in existing urban centers, to re-use former industrial sites, to adapt older buildings for new development, and to bring new development to older, low-income and disadvantaged neighborhoods.

- J. **VITAL SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL AREAS.** APA recognizes that inefficient land use and low-density development is not confined to urban and suburban areas, but also occurs around villages and small towns. Many once thriving main streets are checkered with abandoned storefronts while a strip of new commercial activity springs up on the edge of town together with housing and public facilities. Programs and policies need to support investment to improve the economic health of small town downtowns, and rural community centers. The high cost of providing basic infrastructure and services in rural communities demands efficient use of existing facilities, and compact development. Housing choices in rural areas need to take into account changing needs resulting from shifting demographics, the cost of providing services and infrastructure, the cost of services and infrastructure capacity, and must address upgrading of existing housing as an alternative or complement to new development. Smart Growth is critically important in rural and small town economic development initiatives because the limited availability of public funding means each dollar must accomplish more.
- K. **A GREATER MIX OF USES AND HOUSING CHOICES IN NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES FOCUSED AROUND HUMAN-SCALE, MIXED-USE CENTERS ACCESSIBLE BY MULTIPLE TRANSPORTATION MODES.** Mixed-use developments include quality housing, varied by type and price, integrated with shopping, schools, community facilities and jobs. Human-scale design, compatible with the existing urban context, and quality construction contribute to successful compact, mixed-use development and also promote privacy, safety, visual coherency and compatibility among uses and users.
- L. **CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.** Biodiversity, green infrastructure, and green architecture are integral to Smart Growth. Smart Growth protects the natural processes that sustain life; preserves agricultural land, wildlife habitat, natural landmarks and cultural resources; integrates biodiversity, ecological systems and natural open space (green infrastructure) into the fabric of development; encourages innovative storm water management; is less consumptive and more protective of natural resources; maintains or improves air quality, and enhances water quality and quantity for future generations. Energy conservation is a major benefit and result of Smart Growth, helping to create more sustainable development and allow people to meet current needs without compromising the needs of future generations. Green architecture incorporates environmental protection and reduced natural resource consumption into the design and construction of buildings, also enhancing the comfort and health of the occupants.
- M. **CREATION OR PRESERVATION OF A “SENSE OF PLACE”.** A “sense of place” results when design and development protect and incorporate the distinctive character of a community and the particular place in which it is located. Geography, natural features, climate, culture, historical resources, and ecology each contribute to the distinctive character of a region.

II. THE SMART GROWTH ISSUE

Throughout the history of planning in the United States, there have been national movements that influenced the direction of the planning profession. They include the city beautiful era; the advent of Euclidean zoning; master planning for the automobile-dominated, post-WWII community; the 701 comprehensive plan; advocacy planning in the 1970s; along with environmental protection described by the acronyms of NEPA, CEQA and others. Since the early 20th century, policy makers have offered legislative solutions to communities to manage changes resulting from population growth. In the 1920s, Secretary of Commerce, and later President, Herbert Hoover appointed an advisory committee that drafted the *Standard City Planning and Zoning Enabling Acts*. Many states subsequently adopted enabling laws based on these Acts.

While many Americans may have benefited from the effects of rapid suburbanization: large yards, proximity to open space, new schools, increased mobility, and the financial appreciation of home values, these benefits have not been universally shared. Professional planners acknowledge that the social, economic, and environmental costs of urban dispersion can be more effectively managed, if not avoided entirely. The nation is now experiencing a heightened concern over the social, environmental, and fiscal quality of our communities arising from development practices that aggravate the decline of many urban communities and older suburbs, congest streets and highways, accelerate the loss of natural resources and the deterioration of the natural environment, and limit opportunities for the retention and creation of affordable housing. Often these problems are simply and collectively labeled, “sprawl.” In response, the Smart Growth movement emerged.

Many organizations and individuals are now promoting Smart Growth. Over 60 public interest groups across the U.S. have joined together to form *Smart Growth America*, a coalition advocating better growth policies and practices. Groups ranging from the Urban Land Institute to the Sierra Club to the National Association of Home Builders have released reports and sponsored forums on the topic. Many communities embrace specific aspects of Smart Growth, such as urban service boundaries, pedestrian- and transit-oriented development, controls on sprawl, compact mixed uses, and the protection of agricultural and environmental resources. Concurrently, implementation in a piecemeal fashion has sometimes resulted in unintended consequences that actually aggravated other adverse aspects of rapid urbanization or dispersion. The APA recognizes that it is necessary to balance the interests of diverse public, private and political groups and to serve the collective public interest. Contained within Smart Growth are many interrelated, and potentially conflicting, elements that need to be organized and prioritized, often on a regional basis. Additionally, many of the single interest Smart Growth proposals omit areas of concern to the APA, especially as they deal with social equity and disinvestments in inner city and first ring suburb infrastructure, community facilities, and services. This situation is a major impetus for creating this policy guide.

APA’s 2000 Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability notes that “Sustainability is the capability to equitably meet the vital human needs of the present without compromising the

ability of future generations to meet their own needs by preserving and protecting the area's ecosystems and natural resources. The concept of sustainability describes a condition in which human use of natural resources, required for the continuation of life, is in balance with Nature's ability to replenish them." The important work done in creating the Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability provides an opportunity to extend those policies to the arena of Smart Growth. In response to this opportunity, APA embarked upon a yearlong process to craft this policy guide. The effort formally started at the 2001 Delegate Assembly in New Orleans where a survey, Framing the Issue, was distributed to the participants and was later supplemented by input from APA chapters. The survey and a literature review showed that the concepts of "sprawl" and "sustainability" are intertwined throughout the Smart Growth dialogue. Sprawl, in all of its characterizations, is the antithesis of Smart Growth. Today, we must promote fairness in rebuilding inner city and inner suburban areas, in the development of suburban communities, and in the conservation and revitalization of small towns and rural areas.

Smart Growth should not be limited to combating the symptoms of sprawl. The protection of unique and prime agricultural land to avoid premature conversion to urban and suburban uses, as well as ecological and societal considerations, should be addressed. Planners have the tools at hand to create better communities. It is our professional and ethical responsibility to use these tools to produce results that are fair to all community members in the present and in the future. Fairness requires that we reduce inequalities and that we narrow the gap of disparities in the distribution of resources. We recognize that planning decisions influence the social and economic well being of communities. Today, we must promote fairness in rebuilding inner city and inner suburban areas, in the development of suburban communities, and in the growth of small towns and rural areas.

The Smart Growth Policy Guide helps direct APA efforts to influence public policy to meet those concerns raised by the Smart Growth movement, along with the challenges of sustainability and equity. This guidance can influence federal and state legislation that may provide financial assistance and incentives for states to reassess their planning statutes, update them, and to embark on meaningful implementation of community plans. Additionally, APA challenges the private sector, especially the real estate and lending communities, to join us in working to reverse the negative effects of the current predominant pattern of regional growth and to help us advocate for new policies that will lead to well-designed regional communities of lasting value. APA asks them to join with us in the important educational and informational efforts that will be necessary to build support for Smart Growth with elected officials and policy makers, with their constituents, and with the public-at-large.

Finally, planners, legislators, and others should consult this policy guide when reviewing the *GROWING SMARTSM Legislative Guidebook*, a compendium of statutes for planning and the management of change, as they create proposals for regulatory reform pertaining to planning and development.

III. SPECIFIC POLICY POSITIONS

This section includes policies organized in five categories:

- A. Planning Structure, Process and Regulation
- B. Transportation and Land Use
- C. Regional Management and Fiscal Efficiency
- D. Social Equity and Community Building
- E. Environmental Protection and Land Conservation

Other adopted policy statements that bear on this topic are Planning for Sustainability (adopted in 2000), Agricultural Land Preservation (adopted on April 25, 1999), Endangered Species and Habitat Protection (adopted on April 25, 1999), the Housing Policy Guide (adopted on April 25, 1999), the Policy Guide on Historic and Cultural Resources (adopted April 10, 1997) and policy statements currently under development or revision, including those for Water Resource Management, Wetlands, and Waste Management.

A. PLANNING STRUCTURE, PROCESS AND REGULATION

- 1. The American Planning Association and its Chapters affirm that reforming state legislation is necessary to implement Smart Growth.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: States have a leadership role in fostering long-term, smart growth decisions. While land use regulatory decisions are traditionally a responsibility of local government, state programs, policies, and enabling legislation have a profound affect on local planning and decision-making. States should enable local governments to foster more sensible, planned growth through the revision of planning and police power enabling legislation and by facilitating increased communication between state departments and local governments and among local governments within a region.

- 2. The American Planning Association and its Chapters affirm that effective comprehensive planning, based on Smart Growth principles, is the primary means of implementing Smart Growth.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Planning, especially comprehensive planning, is central to the implementation of Smart Growth. Absent the collective decision-making processes inherent in effective comprehensive planning, those who would implement smart growth measures are limited to a series of short-term, geographically isolated, and disconnected decisions. The comprehensive planning process achieves this through collective decisions about the intensity, the density, and the character of development and the level of public services to be provided.

- 3. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support regulations that support land reuse and require new urban growth to be coordinated with the provision of urban infrastructure capacity.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: The benefits of locating new urban growth in existing urban and urban-adjacent areas include preserving farmland, increasing urban densities, utilizing existing infrastructure capacity, and reducing public infrastructure costs. Tools, such as PDRs and TDRs and Land banking, are available to mitigate the affects on landowners outside of existing urban and urban-adjacent areas who seek to convert properties to urban uses.

- 4. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support the coordination, modernization, restructuring, and consolidation (where necessary) of local governmental units and/or services.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Modernization and restructuring should be pursued where governmental fragmentation impedes Smart Growth decisions. Smart Growth requires a higher degree of coordination, especially in the areas of spending, eminent domain, taxation and regulation, than is possible under the fragmented patterns of local government prevalent in many states. At minimum, local decisions on the creation of new governmental units, urban growth, capital infrastructure, services and maintenance should be subordinated to an intergovernmental planning process in order to minimize competition for tax base and to reward local governments by distributing returns from mutually beneficial decisions. Natural boundaries, such as watersheds and valleys, should be respected in designing these comprehensive areas.

- 5. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support statewide comprehensive planning.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Statewide planning is needed to coordinate and integrate actions on such vital areas as transportation, infrastructure, and environmental policy. The most effective planning will integrate these areas with housing, economic development and other areas. Statewide planning should also engage regional planning efforts to create a mutually supported plan at multiple levels so all levels of government are working in concert to achieve Smart Growth goals.

- 6. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support federal and state incentives and guidance to local governments on the elements to be addressed in comprehensive plans, based on Smart Growth principles. The elements should include land use, transportation, infrastructure, housing, economic development, natural resources, ecological systems, public educational facilities, other community facilities and cultural preservation.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Local governments should be required to make land use decisions within a statewide procedural and policy framework, consistent with a long-term vision and early, on-going public involvement. State governments must help local governments by establishing reasonable ground rules for planning requirements, assisting and funding local governments and rural areas, and providing leadership on inter-jurisdictional issues.

7. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support legislation that provides incentives for adoption of a clearly defined comprehensive plan and capital improvements plan prior to the imposition of land use regulations and controls at the local level.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Land use decisions made without reference to a well-articulated comprehensive plan have contributed to excessive regulation, requests for special treatment and public disdain for the process. Land use regulation should enhance the predictability for residents, investors and builders. Ad hoc decisions by communities, made outside of effective comprehensive planning processes, undermine that predictability

8. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support legislation that requires all actions of local government be consistent with the community's comprehensive plan including, but not limited to, zoning and other land use regulations, as well as the provision of infrastructure.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Consistency among comprehensive plans, land use regulations, capital improvements plans and implementation are at the heart of Smart Growth. Inconsistencies in these areas undermine public confidence in planning and in planners.

9. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support requiring federal agencies to include the effect of federal actions on urban growth and sprawl in their analyses of environmental impacts and to actively support state and local plans for growth management.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Federal policies and programs have a profound effect on local development patterns, yet local communities have little power in identifying, reviewing, or addressing federal actions and projects that may affect their growth. Changing the National Environmental Policy Act to require federal and state agencies to analyze the effects of proposed projects on growth and directing the Council on Environmental Quality to evaluate these reviews will enhance a local community's ability to respond to federal actions.

10. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support regulatory processes that facilitate, encourage and support Smart Growth while eliminating regulatory barriers that increase the cost of Smart Growth.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: It must be easier to develop and redevelop communities based on Smart Growth principles, and harder to develop in the manner that has led to the problems now evident throughout the country. Barriers to Smart Growth must be eliminated at the federal, state, and local levels. Processes, laws and regulatory procedures should not be another layer of review on top of other laws and regulations. A variety of federal agencies, state governments, regional agencies and local governments are preparing programs, ordinances, policies, procedures and laws to promote Smart Growth. As experience grows, successes should be celebrated, publicized, and presented as models for others.

11. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support increased citizen participation in all levels of planning as a means to accommodate diversity while promoting equity and community.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: In an increasingly diverse society, citizen participation is an important means of developing plans that reflect the needs and aspirations of citizens. Planners have an ethical responsibility to involve citizens in planning, especially those affected by the plans. Participation can help to develop social capital, promote a sense of common goals, and develop citizen involvement in implementation. Better plans are a result.

12. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support the provision of a clearinghouse of advanced planning and geographic information for decisions makers and for the public by coordinated regional, state, and federal Internet systems.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: The lack of availability and the fragmentation of basic data -- including GIS maps, technical studies, water resource information, permitting activity, demographic data, and other information -- requires repetitive studies and increases the time required for decision-making. In addition, the information should be made available to the public through a well-maintained web data system.

B. TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

1. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning and funding policies that link land use and transportation choices at the local and regional levels. The basis for transportation funding should reflect the true costs and relative efficiencies of various transportation modes with respect to a variety of users. The costs of federal subsidies for transportation should be reflected in evaluations of transportation investment alternatives.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: A multi-modal transportation system n addressing transportation problems in the United States. From a funding perspective, potential investments should be judged on criteria that are unbiased and reflect the true costs of alternatives.

2. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning and funding policies that acknowledge the continued importance of automotive transportation and support the automobile within a policy context that provides for mitigating its environmental and resource impacts, while increasing non-automotive transportation choices, car-pooling, van pooling and flexible work hours.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Automobiles are likely to remain an important form of transportation for many people, but the negative impacts of automobile transportation can be effectively managed. APA supports federal policies that will make automobiles more efficient, less polluting, and less consumptive of fossil fuels. Automobile transportation also provides inter-modal opportunities. APA supports federal and state efforts to combine automobile transportation with other transportation choices (park-and-rides, kiss-and-rides, adequate parking provision at transit stops) and encourage the pooling of automotive resources.

3. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning policies, legislation and practices that target transportation investments to correct system deficiencies identified through regular performance monitoring of all transportation modes within the system.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Efficient use of transportation funds requires using them to maximize the operational efficiency of the transportation system. Transportation investments made without regard to existing system deficiencies:

- result in sprawling, unplanned development, and allow existing transportation systems to deteriorate
- waste money by allowing funds to be expended for facilities that do not address problems
- lead to redundancies and inefficiencies as construction does not address real needs

A key component of Smart Growth involves the regular performance monitoring of all modes of transportation. Such monitoring identifies system deficiencies and their causes so that transportation investments may be targeted to appropriate infrastructure improvements.

4. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support the development and maintenance of regional and statewide multi-modal transportation plans.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Regional and statewide transportation plans are needed to guide the improvement and expansion of the transportation system in a consistent, logical, and economically and functionally efficient manner. These plans should be multi-modal, covering all significant modes of both people and goods movement, recognizing both public and private sector needs. Transportation planning efforts should also be mutually supportive at all levels to ensure the efficiency and continuity of the system. These plans should form the basis for transportation investment decisions at the regional and state level.

5. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support federal and state incentives and local initiatives that encourage locating new development, especially the development of public facilities, in areas that are supported by a balanced transportation network that provides a variety of transportation choices and supports more active, healthy lifestyles.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Public facilities should be located so they are accessible by multiple modes, including transit, bicycles, and walking. Such facilities will be more widely used than if accessible only by automobile, and the employers will have more access to people who depend on transit, walking, and bicycling.

6. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support changes to roadway design standards that promote and support the use of transit and non-motorized transportation modes, including walking and biking.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Smart Growth recognizes the importance of the automobile to transportation, but seeks to support automotive transportation in the context of greater transportation choice, including the choice to walk or bicycle. The design of roadways and intersections can either enhance or discourage transit and non-automotive transportation choices. Roadway design should consider connectivity, accessibility, function, and speed as they affect safety and security of people who choose not to drive. For instance, roadways designed solely from the point-of-view of enhancing automobile transportation sometimes result in roads that poorly accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists who share roads with cars. The current functional classifications for roadways should be restructured to account for the constraints and opportunities these public facilities pose for the full range of transportation choices.

7. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support policies and plans that place street connection as a high priority in the development of transportation systems.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: The efficiency of a community's transportation system is an objective of Smart Growth policy. Efficiency is enhanced when there are consistent and adequate street connections that allow people and goods to move with as few impediments as possible. Gated communities, private road systems, and the introduction of disconnected cul-de-sac systems promote disconnections. Proper street connectivity, on the other hand, reduces miles traveled, increases non-motorized trips, and supports transit use.

8. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support increased transportation choice and mobility to and from work, home, and school, especially for the less advantaged.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Advocating for equity requires public investment in infrastructure that reduces the need for long commutes and enhances transportation choices for disadvantaged and disabled persons. By locating facilities near transit stops or in mixed-use centers, trips might be consolidated. Planners should promote land use patterns that reduce the need for motorized transportation, increase transportation options, and ensure that infrastructure for non-automotive transportation modes are treated equitably in the planning process.

C. REGIONAL MANAGEMENT AND FISCAL EFFICIENCY

- 1. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support strengthening and modernizing state, metropolitan, and other regional institutions to facilitate multi-jurisdictional decision-making and problem solving.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Most major growth-related problems are regional, not local, in nature. Given the fragmented nature of local governance, individual community success in implementing Smart Growth is likely to shift development to other parts of the region. States have the opportunity to pass modern enabling legislation that promotes Smart Growth planning and development at the regional level.

Regional plans are needed to coordinate local land use decisions and to integrate local decision-making with planning that necessarily crosses municipal boundaries. Transportation corridors, watersheds, air sheds, economic regions and neighborhoods are more appropriate and desirable geographies for planning than the boundaries of political jurisdictions. Given prevalent patterns of development, where jobs are often far from home, affordable housing and public transportation can be addressed effectively only at the regional level. These efforts can simultaneously promote equity by making affordable housing available throughout the metropolitan area and, by supporting economic development, make a labor force available throughout the region.

- 2. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support federal and state incentives for cooperative planning among local governments to address regional impacts and to pursue desired land use patterns through an integrated system of regional plan-making, implementation and monitoring.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Many states have laws that prohibit or inhibit joint planning and/or decision-making by local governments, as well as other entities that make planning and development decisions. Similarly, many local governments have laws, policies, or customs that inhibit cooperation across municipal boundaries. In order to facilitate collaboration among local entities when regional cooperation is needed, these barriers must be removed. Federal and state authorities must encourage cooperation and collaboration by local entities. State and federal grants should encourage cooperative planning and policymaking.

- 3. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support a wide variety of approaches to accomplish Smart Growth, because its principles can be applied to communities of all sizes and locations.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Customs, politics, laws, natural conditions, and other factors vary from state to state and region to region. In addition, problems to be addressed vary

from region to region. Each region must develop its own approach to problem solving and planning while involving the public, private and non-profit sectors. In some areas, this may require a significant change in perspective and culture, but such changes are necessary and beneficial to obtain the results that Smart growth aims to achieve.

4. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support increasing the role of regional planning organization in planning for land conservation, cultural preservation, fiscal efficiency and ecological health.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Efficient use of land resources is a hallmark of Smart Growth. Compact building forms and infill development help support more cost effective public and private infrastructure than low-density development at the fringe of urban areas. Smart Growth means creating neighborhoods where more people use existing services, such as water lines, sewers, roads, emergency services, and schools. Inefficient land use places a financial strain on communities providing for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure. Regional cooperation promotes efficient use of infrastructure and helps avoid duplication of these very expensive investments. At the same time, regional approaches maintain a healthy environment and preserve valuable natural, as well as cultural, resources. Smart Growth is growth that protects identity of places.

5. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support policies that favor the utilization of existing infrastructure capacity over public construction of new infrastructure, including the requirement that new development either pay for the services it requires or be consciously subsidized.

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Policies that increase the number of residents in the urban core or that establish minimum densities for new urban development help ensure that existing infrastructure is fully utilized and that the public is not burdened with the cost of paying for inefficiency. Responsible stewardship over public funds requires that public subsidies be a matter of policy adopted after a public debate of the issue. After debate, local governments may decide to subsidize certain kinds of development and redevelopment in order to advance adopted policies, including the revitalization of central cities.

D. SOCIAL EQUITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

- 1. The American Planning Association and its chapters support a sustained and focused initiative in federal, state and local public policy to reverse the general decline of urban neighborhoods and the trend toward isolated, concentrated poverty through strategies that promote reinvestment within urban communities.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Central city vitality remains at the core of Smart Growth outcomes. Central cities are in a trajectory of long-term decline as a result of the migration of labor and capital. According to the Fannie Mae's report, *The Housing Policy Debate* (1997), most central cities and downtowns are becoming increasingly irrelevant to the future of metropolitan economies, despite signs that population losses have slowed and individual neighborhoods and cities have turned around. Revisions to the federal tax code, renewed federal housing initiatives, local "fair share housing" policies, regional tax base sharing, and the reduction of regulatory barriers that unduly increase the cost of housing are items that need to be overcome.

- 2. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support increased social, economic, and racial equity in our communities and call on the federal government to increase community development funds to remedy these inequities and to include input from all segments of our population in the planning process, and to ensure that planning and development decisions do not unfairly burden economically disadvantaged groups.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Sprawl has aggravated the racial and economic segregation of America's communities by limiting housing choices, transportation choices, educational opportunities, and job access. The spatial distribution of jobs in a region, along with adequate transportation options between work and home, and sufficient housing choice for workers at all levels of compensation, is key to attaining the goals of social, economic, and racial equity. Federal and state government policies should ensure that communities within a region have equitable access to open, natural areas and to community facilities providing recreational opportunities and a range of social services; and should also ensure that no single community is burdened with hosting undesirable but necessary community uses.

- 3. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support federal and state policies and programs that encourage mixed income neighborhoods as the foundation for healthy regions, including requirements for the provision of affordable housing in all new-growth areas or through the reinvestment in core communities.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: Affordable housing should be coordinated regionally to limit concentrations of poverty. Growth strategies must specify provisions for production and maintenance of affordable housing through affirmative measures such as inclusionary zoning practices (zoning that includes a variety of housing types for a variety of income levels) that are applied equally and regionally. Advancement of equity means developing a varied housing stock and planning for stable, mixed income neighborhoods.

4. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support the enhancement of public education systems which are an essential component of community building in urban, suburban and rural areas, and which ensure that children have an opportunity for an excellent education in existing communities. In furtherance of creating such opportunities, APA advocates for strategies that increase neighborhoods that are economically and socially diverse.**

Reason to Support the Specific Policy: If Smart Growth is to work, there must be a sustained effort to improve urban public schools. Otherwise, families will continue to leave cities as soon as they have children. Planners must identify public schools in their community that are at-risk and work with administrators, parents, and neighborhood groups to improve the public school. Planners must advocate for neighborhood diversity, mixed-income housing and educational excellence as the hallmarks of healthy central cities. In the APA/AICP Millennium Survey (December 2000), the highest concern of voters (76%) was having adequate schools and educational facilities. Moreover, when voters in suburbs and small-to-medium cities were asked what might lead them to live in an urban setting, better schools ranked first.

5. **The American Planning Association and its Chapters support planning that identifies the transportation, housing, employment, education and other needs of population change, both with respect to the total number of people expected to reside and also with respect to population groups with special needs such as the elderly, school children, or people of diverse cultures.**

E. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND LAND CONSERVATION

Other policies listed in this Policy Guide will help to achieve environmental protection and land conservation. For example, transportation and regional planning policies consistent with Smart Growth principles also achieve these ends. See also the related APA Policy Guides on Wetlands, Water Resources Management, Waste Management, Planning for Sustainability, Endangered Species and Habitat Protection, and Agricultural Land Preservation.

- 1. The American Planning Association and its Chapters encourage public, private, and non-profit cooperation to achieve a new level of partnership to preserve and enhance ecological integrity over the short- and long-term.**

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: Environmental protection and land conservation have often been seen as the role of the public sector. However, nonprofit organizations and private property owners also have a role and responsibility in good stewardship of the environment. Cooperation and collaboration among all interested parties are needed to improve and enhance ecological integrity. The basis for all planning must be a sense of stewardship or “caring for the earth”, along with an expanded understanding of the long-term implications of daily decisions and the benefits of conservation.

- 2. The American Planning Association and its Chapters supports land and water conservation, including farmland preservation, soil and wetlands conservation, and brownfield remediation and redevelopment. An important tool is full funding of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.**

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: Conservation of land and water resources is important to maintain and enhance healthy ecosystems, and is also an ethical imperative, to protect these resources for future generations. Soil conservation is an important concern and farmland preservation, e.g., with compact development, can be an important result of Smart Growth. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which was established by Congress in 1964, is an extremely important tool to create and enhance parks and open spaces, protect wilderness and wetlands, preserve wildlife habitat, and enhance recreational opportunities. The LWCF provides funding to all levels of government as well as the nonprofit sector. See also the policy below regarding water, and APA’s other Policy Guides.

- 3. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support protection and enhancement of biodiversity through the planning process. Planning for biodiversity should use the best available science to assess natural resources and determine areas of environmental vitality as the first step in incorporating “green infrastructure” into human settlements.**

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: Natural systems and biodiversity are critical to the support of human populations. Biodiversity planning should be included in the early stages of land use planning. Planning should include an inventory of natural processes and ecosystems. To the extent such information is available, plans should include identification of natural vegetation, wetlands, arid lands, endangered and threatened plant and animal species, umbrella and indicator species, species that are commercially important in the state, and species habitat (including food sources, denning and nursery areas, and migratory routes). Based upon this inventory, all land use and development plans should incorporate “green infrastructure” based on good science and best available management practices to limit deleterious impacts on fragile ecosystems. Green infrastructure is an interconnected network of greenways and natural lands that includes wild life habitat, waterways, native species and preservation or protection of ecological processes. All development -- including redevelopment, infill development, and new construction in urbanizing areas -- should plan for biodiversity and incorporate green infrastructure. Green infrastructure helps to maintain natural ecosystems, including clean air and water; reduces wildlife habitat fragmentation, pollution, and other threats to biodiversity. It also improves the quality of life for people. Tools for preservation of natural open spaces include acquisition of conservation easements by governments or non-profits, transfer of development rights, and conservation design, in addition to land acquisition by public agencies.

- 4. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support federal and state agencies providing assistance to county and local governments to collect and analyze information on natural communities and processes. County and local governments should supplement this information with local knowledge. Using the combined information, all levels of government should work with non-profit organizations, businesses, and citizens to designate green infrastructure policies and carry them out.**

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: Many local governments, where land use planning takes place, do not have the staff or technological resources to inventory and map biodiversity resources for their communities. Federal and state agencies that have the resources and scientific/technical knowledge needed on topics such as ecology and biodiversity should provide financial and technical assistance to county and local agencies, which augment the information with local knowledge. A county or local government benefits by obtaining technical information necessary to write a strong plan, while the state and federal governments benefit by enhancing the protection of natural resources through partnerships with local governments and nonprofits.

- 5. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support a balanced energy policy including conservation and development of renewable energy resources.**

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: A comprehensive energy policy should include reduction of energy consumption, development of new supplies, and use of existing natural resources, such as coal, gas and oil, while protecting sensitive ecosystems. Energy conservation

would include transportation policy, development patterns that minimize vehicular miles traveled, and green architecture. Development of new energy supplies should include renewable energy. Use of renewable energy sources will contribute to reduce dependence upon fossil fuels, also helping to reduce concentrations of carbon dioxide and other gases in the atmosphere. Increased use of alternative energy sources will also contribute to healthier, more stable local economies through reduced dependence on one or two energy sources that have an uncertain future. Solar power is likely to become more important in future years and development patterns should balance the need for solar access with the need for dense urban development. Development may be able to take advantage of industrial cogeneration possibilities, utilizing waste heat from industry to heat surrounding buildings. APA's Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability can provide additional insight on steps that can be taken to develop a balanced energy policy.

6. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support environmentally conscious design and construction, including “green architecture” practices, adoption of LEED Green Building Rating System and the adaptive reuse of buildings, and land recycling.

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a national nonprofit organization representing all parts of the building industry, has documented the environmental impact of buildings. Impacts reported as of January 2002 include, for commercial and residential construction:

- 65% of total U.S. electricity consumption
- 36% of total U.S. energy use
- 30% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions
- 136 million tons of construction and demolition waste in the U.S. (almost 3 pounds per person per day)
- 40% of raw material use globally.

The USGBC has developed and administers the “LEED” green building rating system to promote “green design” (see www.usgbc.org for details). LEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, shows great promise to provide benefits such as reducing the impacts of natural resource consumption, enhancing comfort and health, and minimizing strain on local infrastructure while producing financial benefits for building owners and developers. LEED standards cover site design, conservation of materials and resources including water and energy, and indoor environmental quality. Green design practices include building reuse and preservation, which preserve a unique sense of place in our communities, save building resources, and keep demolition refuse out of landfills. Historic preservation also often saves

energy and other natural resources. Green architecture is a growing practice that should be recognized and adopted by all who construct buildings.

7. The American Planning Association and its Chapters support comprehensive water supply, distribution, treatment, and storm water planning to protect water supplies, preserve water quality, and prevent flooding.

Reasons to Support the Specific Policy: Clean and adequate water supplies are indispensable for life. Comprehensive programs are needed to protect both water quality and quantity. Development practices, including design and construction, must protect water resources. A variety of planning strategies, design and development standards, and management practices are needed:

- Xeriscaping and natural, local landscaping that minimizes water usage
- Minimizing of paving and impervious surfaces that inhibit natural water drainage and ground water recharge
- Innovative legislation and regulations -- may include conservation and engineering performance standards, buffers, maximum water run-off, agriculture zoning, etc.
- Minimizing of fertilizer and other chemical usage that produces polluted run-off and affects water quality off-site

IV. POLICY OUTCOMES

This section, not usually included in APA policy guides, is provided here to summarize APA's desired results from the implementation of these policies.

A. In the area of planning process and regulation:

1. Reform of state planning enabling acts to promote proactive planning that encourages regional cooperation, collaborative citizen participation in public life, diverse neighborhoods, the equitable distribution of resources, and fiscal responsibility.
2. Well-designed, enduring communities that are sustainable in the near and the long term.
3. Improved communication and collaboration by the various levels of governments, citizens, developers, and other interested parties to improve efficiency and build better communities.
4. Slowing of low-density sprawl and a reversal in the dispersion of housing and jobs into single-use, land consumptive development patterns in favor of densification and centralization.
5. Growth in areas that can support growth, encouraged by intelligent land use planning. The creation of new urban settlements within planned urban growth areas, or in planned new urban areas, containing nodes of high-density development that include higher density housing, the majority of community facilities and jobs, and connected by transit.
6. Federal and State support, in terms of policy and incentives, for local decision-making processes, including comprehensive planning.
7. Development decisions that are predictable, fair and fiscally responsible.

B. In the area of transportation and land use:

1. A major shift from single-occupancy automotive transit to travel by bus, fixed-rail systems, ferries, walking and bicycling in existing settlements and new urban-growth areas.
2. Automobile support that appropriately accommodates other modes of transportation, especially non-motorized modes, including providing for appropriate vehicle storage that does not result in further de-centralization and dispersion.

C. In the area of regional management and fiscal efficiency:

1. Improved long-term viability of regions and their constituent local governments.
2. Reordering of regional infrastructure planning and development from fragmented and uncoordinated local governments to regional bodies strengthened by states to exercise this function.
3. Local governments whose taxpayers are not burdened with the costs for financing ever-increasing infrastructure backlogs.

D. In the areas of social equity and community building:

1. Vibrant central cities that have experienced a cycle of renewal and rebirth, whose neighborhoods accommodate a diversity of people with a range of backgrounds, economic capacity, and family structures.
2. Reversal in the centralization of poverty in urban cores and first-ring suburbs.
3. Elimination of regulatory barriers that impede construction of affordable housing.
4. Decreased racial and economic segregation through regulations requiring affordable housing in all new-growth areas.

E. In the areas of environmental protection and land conservation:

1. Improvements in air and water quality and in the preservation of natural areas and wildlife habitat.
2. Provision of green infrastructure (an interconnected network of natural lands, natural areas and wild life habitat, and waterways) in existing settlements and new urban growth area.
3. Slowing in the conversion rate of agricultural and non-urbanized land to urban-type land uses.
4. Protection and enhancement of ecosystems, incorporating biodiversity and green infrastructure into developed areas.

