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The Smart Growth, Better Neighborhoods Action Guide

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PART I

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT

Smart Growth

Why

Throughout the nation, thousands of community organizations like yours are hard at work. You are building affordable housing, renovating storefronts and commercial districts, creating jobs and protecting valued open space. You are also building healthy neighborhoods and strong communities by promoting active participation by residents and stakeholders, developing a common vision for the future, and providing a voice on behalf of low-income residents.

Groups like yours have had considerable success in the face of long odds. Community development has brought significant improvements and investment to struggling neighborhoods and new opportunities to their residents. But despite this good work, there are powerful underlying forces that compromise these groups' ability to achieve even greater success. Now, however, community organizations have significant new opportunities, and new tools, to become more effective, by addressing the underlying causes that result in unbalanced regional growth and tremendous disparities among neighborhoods.

Inequalities among neighborhoods result from a variety of deep-seated issues. Racial discrimination and segregation, fragmented local governance, tax policies, conventional zoning and road-focused regional transportation policies all contribute to a growing pattern of neighborhood abandonment and sprawl. These patterns have isolated poor people, including many people of color, in struggling, older neighborhoods.

Why Smart Growth?

Over the past few years a new movement has been growing — one that seeks to improve transportation options, preserve open space, protect the environment, expand housing choices, and strengthen existing communities. "**Smart growth**," as it is called, is a new way of looking at how communities, metropolitan regions and states grow. **Smart growth emphasizes better planning that coordinates land use and transportation, and gives people more options for where and how they live, work and play. It also provides one of the best opportunities in years for community groups to address the inequalities that keep some neighborhoods and their residents from achieving social and economic resources and stability.** Smart growth provides an effective way of solving the issues neighborhoods care about — whether it's fair housing, environmental protection, quality schools, safety, or commercial development. It opens new choices for where people live and work, and how they get around. It promotes just and equitable growth across all neighborhoods.

Ultimately, addressing the problems of disinvestment and decay that impact older urban neighborhoods and small towns requires the same systemic, regional approach as planning for better land use and protection of open space. In fact, these are two sides of the same coin. Gradually, the community development and smart growth movements have been discovering this common ground and finding new ways to address shared concerns.

About This Toolkit

Increasingly, neighborhoods in all types of communities — cities and suburbs, small towns and rural areas — are looking at smart growth as a tool for revitalization. Smart growth offers communities a coordinated, collaborative approach to comprehensive, sustainable revitalization. While community-based organizations will continue to work in neighborhoods on specific projects and issues, smart growth provides a new opportunity to reach out to other neighborhoods, organizations and players to make the changes that can help strengthen all communities.

Why should different communities within a region care about what's happening in each other's back yards? Because their futures are linked. Decline in one place — the failure of a once-thriving commercial center, the gentrification of a once-affordable neighborhood, or the rapid loss of farms on the urban edge — reverberates in the others.

Ultimately, smart growth is a way of addressing inequalities that responds not just to the local symptoms of unbalanced growth, but to their root causes: the policies and structural systems operating at the regional level. A neighborhood's region depends on its context: for neighborhoods in large urban areas, the region is the metropolitan area; for small towns in rural areas, the region may be the state as well as the county or nearby metropolitan area.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

At its heart, smart growth is about encouraging officials to make better decisions, spend money more equitably, and create more livable communities. Such an effort requires understanding who those leaders are, how their decisions impact neighborhoods and how to best convince them to change their habits. That's what this toolkit is about. It provides new tools to address the root causes, not just the symptoms, of unbalanced regional growth. It provides a roadmap for finding common ground between the community development and smart growth movements, and working together to achieve common goals.

The kit includes information on:

- The neighborhood-level impacts of regional growth
- How activists can influence the planning and development process to improve the quality and style of development in their communities

A Brief Look at the Rest of the Toolkit

Part II, Overview -- Neighborhoods, Regions And Smart Growth: Understanding The Connection provides solid background on smart growth and the problems that have isolated communities and neighborhoods in the past.

Part III, Making A Difference: A Checklist For Action provides an overview of the steps that groups can take to develop and implement a strategy to work with partners on regional smart growth

Part IV, Going Deeper: Visioning, Planning, Building Coalitions And An Agenda For Change provides in-depth how-to information.

Part V: Constituencies: Community Assessment Guides profiles the different types of groups you may want to seek out as partners.

Part VI, Appendices provides information/examples and contacts for a number of smart growth-related organizations.

Part VII, Resources: Where To Go To Get More Information lists a variety of relevant publications.

- How to determine the major issues in a community and where to turn for facts and figures to support smart growth efforts
- How to build a coalition of traditional and nontraditional partner organizations
- How to pull all these pieces together to advocate for fair and effective reform

Who This Toolkit Can Help

This toolkit is for any community organization or leader interested in sustainable neighborhood revitalization. It has been developed primarily in keeping with the interests and goals of community-based organizations in lower-income urban, rural and older suburban neighborhoods. However, anyone who is seeking to understand and respond to the impacts of growth and development on neighborhoods will find this to be a valuable resource.

Remember — Big Changes Take Time

Ultimately, this toolkit presents an entirely new way to view and tackle community development and neighborhood revitalization. It takes the approach that you can't change your neighborhood without considering what's happening BEYOND your neighborhood. It also assumes two things about smart growth:

- that it can be a powerful tool for revitalizing neighborhoods, and
- while smart growth provides a valuable framework for development at the neighborhood level, ultimately it requires a regional and statewide commitment.

Changing current development patterns, practices, and policies is the kind of sea change that unfolds gradually over time. Following the approach outlined in this toolkit should challenge you and lead you to new insights about your neighborhood. While the suggested research, coalition building, and visioning work takes time, and it may take a while to see results, the results will be more sustainable over the long run.

And remember — not every organization has to undertake every task outlined in this toolkit. The main idea is to find what works for you. Seek out an existing coalition, or join with others to build one, so you can take on the issues that will help your neighborhood prosper.

PART II

NEIGHBORHOODS, REGIONS, AND SMART GROWTH: UNDERSTANDING THE CONNECTION

SECTIONS:

1 WHAT IS SMART GROWTH?

2 NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE REGION

WHAT IS SMART GROWTH?

1. WHAT IS SMART GROWTH?

Planners and policy-makers often use the term "smart growth" to refer to an array of development strategies to confront the social, environmental and economic challenges in our communities.[1] In general, smart growth strategies:

- **focus development in and around existing communities** instead of spreading it out into the countryside
- **rehabilitate,** revitalize and preserve existing neighborhoods, housing and commercial space
- **mix land uses and housing types** in compact, walkable neighborhoods
- provide neighborhoods with a variety of **transportation choices**, including transit, walking and biking
- **foster distinctive, attractive places** with a strong sense of place
- **preserve important open space**.

For smart growth to succeed, it is important to include community members in the planning process. It is also important to make development decisions that are predictable,

NNC Smart Growth Principles

The National Neighborhood Coalition has created a series of principles that add equity- and neighborhood-focused elements to the physical aspects of smart growth. These principles can serve as guideposts for forming a smart growth agenda that gets neighborhoods involved in regional decisions about efficient and sustainable development.

1. All neighborhoods and communities should have a fair share of the benefits as well as responsibilities of growth.
2. Growth should meet the economic, environmental and social needs of low- and moderate-income and other communities.
3. Low-income neighborhoods and communities of color should have a strong voice in decisions about growth.
4. Growth should not displace low-income residents or people of color in urban or rural areas from their homes, livelihoods or communities.
5. Growth strategies should promote racial, economic and ethnic integration.
6. Growth strategies should make use of the human, economic and physical assets within communities.

[1] See the Smart Growth Network's Principles, http://www.smartgrowth.org.

fair and cost-effective for the private sector, since the private sector will likely play a key role in implementing many of the plans.

2. NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE REGION

The choices people make about where and how they want to live are supported by incentives built into our nation's laws and political structure. Public policies at all levels of government contribute to the sprawling, outward expansion of our communities. A few examples of how this happens:

- Tax policies encourage competition among cities for middle-class and high-income residents and businesses.
- Transportation investment patterns consist in great part of highway and road construction projects.
- The fragmented political nature of regions — with dozens, sometimes hundreds of local governments — makes it very difficult to establish coherent regional policies on issues like land use, housing, economic development or environmental protection.

These policies affect large geographic areas and cut across very different kinds of communities. That is why remedies call for an approach that can help communities and organizations work together in a regional coalition.

Different Neighborhoods — Different Experiences

Different types of communities have faced different experiences over the years when it comes to growth. Understanding these experiences may help you to think creatively about how different community types can better work together on a regional approach to smart growth.

- **The Central City** — *The historical heart of the region*
  Many central cities have experienced considerable revitalization in recent years. But they still face significant challenges that put them at a disadvantage in the competition for residents and jobs, including highly concentrated poverty, racial segregation and low-performing schools. In some central cities, poverty is compounded by the prohibitive cost of living. Low- and even moderate-income residents are being pushed out of the housing market by fast-growing housing prices and rents, as demand for city housing increases among more affluent households.
- **At-Risk Suburbs** — *Inner suburbs, older satellite cities and low-density exurban communities*
  These communities face growing social and economic needs, aging or insufficient infrastructure and stagnant tax resources. This combination can lead to a spiral of decline, as officials increase taxes or cut services to balance the budget, which in turn inhibits growth and leads to more decline. Without the cultural amenities, large public parks and active downtown of many central cities, these places are at greater risk of rapid decline once social stress appears.

In the Region

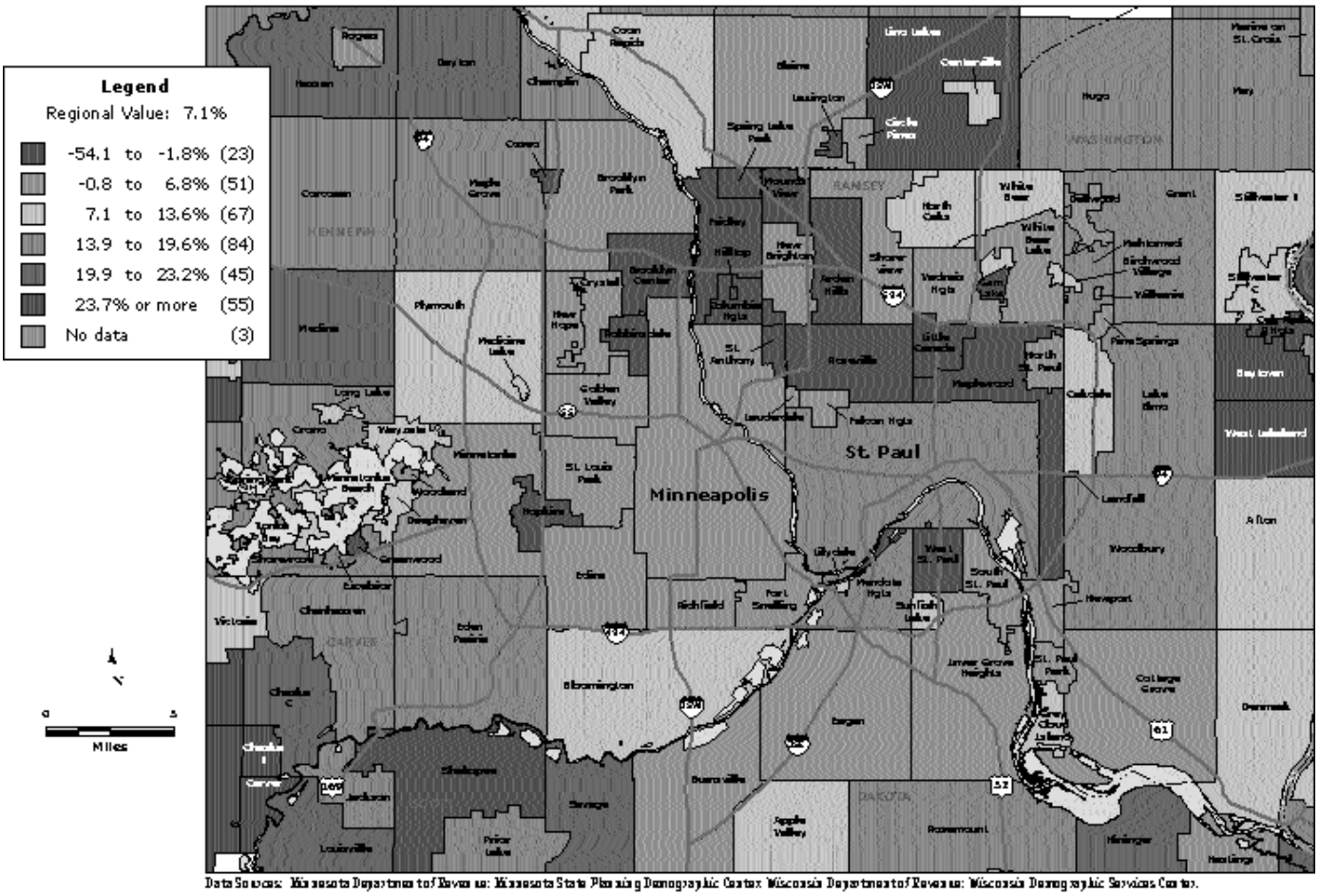
- **Growing Bedroom Communities** — *Rapidly growing outer suburbs*
  These growing places are home to many middle-class families with children, but few jobs. As a result, their residents often face long commutes. Lack of commercial tax base and a high ratio of children strains residential tax bases, and often leads to overcrowded classrooms and low per-pupil spending. A weak tax base also makes it hard to pay for roads and sewers needed to accommodate growth.

- **Affluent Job Centers** — *Upper-income new and established suburbs*
  With a steady flow of jobs, high-end housing and retail outlets, these places have few social needs and more than their fair share of regional office space. But that attractiveness comes with a price: congested roads and loss of the valuable open space that attracted people in the first place.

- **Rural communities** — *Microcosms of all of the above*.
  Rural communities have suffered for lack of planning capacity and the erosion of their traditional economic base — the small-scale farm and main street businesses. They have been harmed by the spread of big-box retailers, loss of local businesses, and environmentally harmful rural economic investments.

In the Region

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL REGION (CENTRAL AREA):
Percentage Change in Tax Capacity per Household by Municipality, 1993-1998



Data Sources: Minnesota Department of Revenue; Minnesota State Planning Demographic Center; Wisconsin Department of Revenue; Wisconsin Demographic Services Center.

Many at-risk inner suburbs of the Minneapolis-St. Paul region are losing ground in their ability to raise tax revenues for needed public services.

PART III

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: A CHECKLIST FOR ACTION

An Overview

Planning for better growth isn't up to elected officials and professional planners alone. Around the country, neighborhood residents and community groups like yours are bringing to the process an informed vision for their communities' future.

This section outlines key steps for influencing the regional agenda as an essential strategy for improving your neighborhood.

Increasingly, community groups such as yours understand that **success depends on a regional smart growth approach that addresses inequalities throughout a region, and offers better housing, transportation and job opportunities to residents.** That often means joining with other organizations that are working on complementary efforts or in other areas of the region — even groups you might not expect to work with — to make broad policy reforms or change funding patterns. It means understanding what's happening in your neighborhood within a larger regional context. And it means having a vision for your community that is based on an understanding of the regional context — the larger forces that are affecting your community and its quality of life.

Key Steps — An Overview

The following checklist outlines major steps and milestones for developing and implementing a strategy to work with partners on regional smart growth. Each item on the checklist is discussed in detail in a section (or sections) of Part IV and V of the toolkit, *Going Deeper: Visioning, Planning, Building Coalitions And An Agenda For Change; and Part V — Constituencies: Community Assessment Guides*.

Rather than thinking of this as a linear step-by-step process, we encourage you to use these steps as a sort of menu from which to choose challenges that fit your current needs. You may decide to skip some steps altogether, and perform others simultaneously. Every community's problems are different — so are the solutions. Also, remember that this is a long-term process — a sustainable approach that will have long-term benefits for your community. Results will take time.

We suggest that you get started by reviewing the information here to get a sense of all the different pieces of the puzzle. Figure out what steps you may have already taken, what you want and need to do, what information you already have, and what you need to know before you begin.

Here's our checklist:

- **Know Your Community**
- **Develop a Vision and Goals To Achieve It**
- **Involve Residents**
- **Understand the Development Process**
- **Get Technical Assistance**
- **Build Your Coalition – Identify Allies**
- **Define an Agenda**
- **Participate in the Public Process**
- **Show How the Whole Region Benefits**
- **Keep At It**

✓ KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

Spend time up-front getting a handle on the trends in your community and the broader region. What are the social, physical and economic challenges faced by your community and your region? Take the time to put numbers on these issues by researching affordable housing and transportation needs, job opportunities, existing zoning and economic development policies. (There are resources to help you with this — see "Get Technical Assistance" below.)

For how-to guidance, see these sections in Part IV — *Assessing Your Community; Getting the Facts*

✓ DEVELOP A VISION AND GOALS TO ACHIEVE IT

What do you want for your community? Take the time to come up with a vision and lay it out. Your community should be proactive rather than reactive; you should be prepared to offer ideas for what you want. Smart growth goals worth embracing include racial and income diversity, quality schools, a strong local economy, attractive open spaces and quality transit service. What part of your region's future growth is your community prepared to accept — and what should it look like? There are many available techniques for encouraging civic participation in vision-setting — seek them out.

For how-to guidance, see these sections in Part IV — *Assessing Your Community; Using the Regional Lens to Create a Vision for Your Community*

✓ INVOLVE RESIDENTS

The early participation of diverse community members is critical to your success. The nuts-and-bolts of planning, development and policy-making can be complex — invest time in educating your partner groups and fellow collaborators about your respective issues. The project you end up

pursuing should include elements important to each segment of the community — not just "rubber stamping" existing plans. Broad and diverse involvement will improve the final product and lend critical legitimacy to your efforts. Train and mentor community volunteers so they have the skills and information they need to be effective. Help residents and other organizations learn the ins and outs of participating in city council meetings or town zoning board meetings, and taking part in other aspects of local government structure. As your efforts expand, spread the work around to avoid burnout.

For how-to guidance, see this section in Part IV — *Using the Regional Lens to Create a Vision for Your Community; and Part V — Constituencies: Community Assessment Guides*.

✓ UNDERSTAND THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Learn about the planning structure at the neighborhood, city, regional and state levels. Find out which entities make which decisions, and how they affect your neighborhood. Learn how public policies — everything from tax laws and zoning ordinances to sewer and transportation financing — shape the type and style of development in your community. Understand how developers think. If zoning codes and building regulations make it very difficult to build a smart growth oriented project, a developer is not likely to spend the extra time and money that it will take to jump over these hurdles. It is not that developers don't like or don't care about poor people, but like any businessperson, a developer will stick to what makes sense economically. Because the underlying land development costs do not change very much with the type of housing that is erected, a developer that makes the investment to build high-end housing rather than lower or moderately priced homes can make a massive profit from this type of housing. Seek out financing programs that can fill in the gap between what developers can do and what you want. Look for examples of similar projects in other neighborhoods or regions that have successfully implemented smart growth principles.

For how-to guidance, see these sections in Part IV — *A Policy Reform Agenda for Smarter Growth: Strengthening the Neighborhood-Region Connection; Neighborhoods, Regions and Planning*

✓ GET TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Your group doesn't have to do all of the work alone — help is available. Solicit the support of local, state and national nonprofits, city planners and local colleges and universities. These entities can often give you advice, and sometimes lend you skilled people, to promote your smart growth efforts. Among ways they can help: increasing public participation, identifying potential partners, and completing technical tasks like data collection, computer mapping, surveying or site planning.

For how-to guidance, see this section in Part IV — *Getting the Facts*

✓ BUILD YOUR COALITION — IDENTIFY ALLIES

Seek out the array of organizations that share similar concerns –social service organizations and schools that face the personal consequences of regional polarization everyday, environmental groups concerned about the destruction of important ecological features, community development corporations working on neighborhood revitalization, agricultural advocates trying to stem the loss of valuable farm land, civil rights organizations fighting unfair treatment of our most vulnerable citizens, and organized labor. Look to nearby communities with issues similar to yours. But don't stop there — reach out to nontraditional partners to build your coalition. Look for common ground with builders

and business leaders. Your work is part of a regional system; reach across city-suburb divisions.
For how-to guidance, see these sections in Part IV and V — Building a Smart Growth Coalition; Constituencies: Community Assessment Guides

✓ DEFINE AN AGENDA

What changes need to be made at the neighborhood, city, county or regional level for your community and the larger region to grow smarter? What particular concerns are priorities — housing? schools? tax policy? Identify projects that will realize your vision and establish criteria that you can use to help define a specific agenda. Look for the big issues; find the fights that count and use them to crystallize the issues. Champion the investments that will really make a smart growth difference. What do you need to make smart growth happen? Whose support do you need to get it?
For how-to guidance, see these sections in Part IV — *A Policy Reform Agenda for Smarter Growth: Strengthening The Neighborhood-Region Connection; Using the Regional Lens To Create a Vision for your Community*

✓ PARTICIPATE IN THE PUBLIC PROCESS

Armed with a vision, an agenda for action, and the facts to back up what you say, go out and press the flesh. To change things, you will need to educate decision-makers. Attend meetings on issues that concern your community. Talk to the media about your efforts and concerns. Build personal relationships with the elected decision-makers whose support is required at all levels of government. You're selling an idea, and like any sale, success depends on building trust with the prospective buyer. Always follow through on your commitments.
For how-to guidance, see this section in Part IV — *Building a Smart Growth Coalition*

✓ SHOW HOW THE WHOLE REGION BENEFITS

There is growing evidence linking the well-being of one part of a region to the well-being of other parts. Show how your project or initiative will improve the region as a whole. Reach out to business leaders concerned about the region's competitiveness and efficiency, and to religious leaders and community service organizations concerned about the social justice aspects of sprawl and urban decay. Offer information to local elected officials about how they benefit from a regional approach that supports all localities rather than making communities compete with one another. The support of business and religious leaders and elected officials will give added legitimacy to your work in the public eye. It can help encourage positive support and action by those who may have felt they had no personal stake in the problem.

✓ KEEP AT IT

Finally, keep your eyes on the big picture; move forward on tangible and winnable short-term goals. Move on various fronts and be prepared with alternatives. Small successes help keep participants motivated and demonstrate your power and resolve to the broader community.

PART IV

VISIONING, PLANNING, BUILDING COALITIONS, AND AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

GOING DEEPER:

SECTIONS:

1. A Policy Reform Agenda For Smarter Growth: Strengthening The Neighborhood-Region Connection

2. Assessing Your Community: Making The Connections To Smart Growth

3. Getting The Facts: Information Is Power

4. Visioning And Planning For Smarter Growth: Using The Regional Lens To Create A Vision For Your Community; Neighborhoods, Regions, And Planning

5. Building A Smart Growth Coalition

The Neighborhood Region Connection

1. A POLICY REFORM AGENDA FOR SMARTER GROWTH: STRENGTHENING THE NEIGHBORHOOD-REGION CONNECTION

***"Regional policy reform is not just an add-on program separate from the organization's other efforts. In fact, it is not necessarily a program at all; it is a way of seeing and understanding a tangle of persistent challenges and trying to address them at their source. Every local problem is driven by a larger constellation of policies and decisions made outside the community, and that perspective and approach should infuse and inform all the organization's activities."* — Mary Matheny, Baltimore, MD.**
See Appendix: *NNC Case study abstracts — Community Planning and Housing Association*.

Leveling the playing field when it comes to funding and access to opportunity among neighborhoods within a region means taking a regional approach to community development and smart growth. This will promote healthy development of all communities, rather than setting them up to compete with each other. **(See page 28: Case Study — *Isles, Inc*.)**

As the Introduction says, the problems associated with concentrated poverty — everything from high crime to poor health — discourage investment, place a significant burden on city resources, and isolate residents from educational, employment and social opportunities.

Meanwhile, local governments burdened by rapid growth try to lure high-end developments that contribute more in tax revenue than they cost in public services. The large single-family homes, shopping centers and office parks that result are devouring some of the nation's most productive agricultural land and causing serious traffic congestion and pollution.

These divergent experiences — disinvestment in the core and rapid growth on the urban edge — are supported by public policies at all levels of government. Smart growth is an important tool for leveling the playing field within a region. However, as we've said, it can't happen one neighborhood at a time. Community organizations and residents can build coalitions with other organizations and neighborhoods to promote regional and statewide approaches. **For how-to guidance, see this section in Part IV — Building a Smart Growth Coalition.**

There are at least **three areas of regional reform** that can help reverse the growing social polarization in the nation's regions and provide the foundation for smarter growth: **land-use and transportation planning, tax reform and governance**.

A. Regional Land Use and Transportation Planning

Regional land-use and transportation planning helps communities coordinate investments in housing, roads, highways, schools, sewer lines and parks more efficiently, so that certain areas do not disproportionately attract growth and investment while other areas struggle.

Land-use planning means that a community selects where and how it will grow by assigning particular land uses for areas (such as residential areas, commercial and retail, industrial, parks and recreation), and selecting projects that will help fulfill that vision. Currently, land-use planning is often fragmented and poorly coordinated at the regional level. Regional coordination of planning can guide development more efficiently and equitably by directing new infrastructure away from areas with sensitive open space and toward communities equipped to handle it. Furthermore, it can help municipalities within a region to think more broadly about how growth patterns affect housing choices, neighborhood schools, and access to jobs — so they can begin to address inequities in these areas.

Regional coordination of land-use planning is important because individual communities can do little to deal with the underlying regional forces contributing to sprawl. Local growth management rules that limit development in one community may simply push it to other areas, increasing traffic and sending sprawl even further into the countryside. Without a regional plan for protecting open space and farmland, the actions of individual places to control growth can actually make the problems of sprawl worse — not better.

More benefits of regional planning:

- It can ensure that all communities, particularly those with new jobs and good schools, strengthen their commitment to affordable housing. That helps reduce the consequences of concentrated poverty on core communities, and provides people with real choices about where they live.

- It can be a powerful tool in the fight against NIMBY-ism, by laying out clear requirements, guidelines and incentives for providing affordable housing throughout a region.

Already, 16 states have adopted comprehensive growth management acts, and their ranks are growing. Regional land-use planning efforts, like those required in Oregon's statewide program, help officials coordinate investments in roads, highways, sewers and utilities. Concurrency requirements like those in Florida mandate that infrastructure should be online by the time development takes place. State departments of transportation (DOTs) and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are key players in regional planning efforts, since transportation funding flows through these organizations. **See Appendix: *Metropolitan Planning Organizations*.**

Successful smart growth requires communities to cooperate in land-use planning. That's a challenge, but one that yields enormous positive benefits by protecting open space, building infrastructure more efficiently and stabilizing cities and older suburbs.
For how-to guidance, see these sections in Part IV — *Using the Regional Lens to Create a Vision for Your Community; Neighborhoods, Regions and Planning*

B. Regional Tax Reform

Regional tax reform can narrow the fiscal gap between rich and poorer places, and decrease the incentives for them to compete with one another for tax base.

At the roots of regional tax reform is a more equitable fiscal relationship between cities. This kind of reform is not unprecedented — it has close cousins in state school-aid systems that exist in virtually every state in the country.

Fiscal equity policies include state programs that distribute aid to local governments and regional tax-base and revenue-sharing programs. These programs can be designed many ways, but all have the goal of distributing funds based on the social or physical needs in communities.

Such programs have several benefits.

- They allow tax-base-poor places to compete on a level playing field with their more affluent neighbors. Without such policies, central cities, at-risk suburbs and small towns are often forced to tax themselves at a much higher rate than their better-off neighbors, to compensate for high costs and relatively meager tax bases. Meanwhile, affluent suburbs can rely on their significant tax bases to offer high-quality public services at relatively low rates.
- They can help ensure that older, stressed communities — places living with aging infrastructure, industrial pollution and high levels of poverty — have the resources to compete against communities offering cheaper land, new homes and more open space, without engaging in wholesale gentrification that displaces low- and moderate-income residents.
- The "split-rate" property tax, another tax reform component that shows promise, taxes land more heavily than what is built on it. The split-rate tax encourages landowners to develop their property more intensively than traditional property tax systems, which can promote land speculation or abandonment. Although local economic development has been the primary rationale for the tax— most notably in several Pennsylvania cities, including Pittsburgh — the split-rate tax also shows promise as a component of a broader anti-sprawl program.

See page 27: *One option for correcting the local property tax to support smart growth and healthy neighborhoods.*

C. Regional Governance

Accountable regional governance gives all communities a voice in regional decision-making about transportation, land-use planning and taxes.

Political fragmentation has made it difficult to address problems that cross municipal boundaries, like concentrated poverty, fiscal disparities, shortages of affordable housing, traffic congestion and sprawl. With dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of local governments making their own land-use decisions, it can be hard to see how all of the pieces fit together into a comprehensive whole.

The Neighborhood-Region Connection

However, forums do exist to help make fitting the pieces together a bit easier. In most metropolitan areas, there are regional institutions in place that can serve as a backbone for greater regional cooperation. Federal law requires that every major region in the country have a body to coordinate hundreds of millions of transportation dollars. In their current incarnations, these forums— metropolitan planning organizations, or MPOs, are appointed bodies of local officials.

The challenge is to make these existing, sometimes shadowy regional governments more effective on issues of growth, and more visible and accountable to the people they serve. One suggestion is to apportion the membership of regional bodies by population, and ideally, to let the people elect them directly.

Some municipalities are trying new ways to work with each other and new ways to govern, whether through memorandums of understanding between municipalities to jointly implement and enforce a policy, or through consolidation of city and county government (as in the case of "Unigov," the consolidated government of the city of Indianapolis and surrounding Marion County, IN).

For better or worse, the well-being of different parts of regions are linked. When social and economic disparities within regions are minimized, everyone benefits.

Case Study:
Two-Rate Tax in Harrisburg

The capital of Pennsylvania in 1980 was a sick city. It had lost a third of its population in two decades. Nearly 800 businesses had shut down and the city was pock-marked with boarded up stores and housing. According to federal standards, Harrisburg was cited as the second most distressed city in the nation.

Property tax reform was among the major tools Harrisburg used to turn itself around. It reduced the tax rate on buildings and increased the rate on the value of sites. "The result," wrote urbanologist/columnist Neal Peirce, "is that it costs speculators so much to 'sit on' vacant or under-utilized city land that they either build or sell out to others who will. And homeowners don't get hit with major tax boosts when they improve their property."

Immediately empty buildings, vacant lots and abandoned housing started coming back into use. Business Administrator Napoleon Saunders said that, of the 5,200 vacant buildings the city counted in 1982, "only around 300 remain and those are slated for rehab or demolition to make way for new uses."

Harrisburg Mayor Stephen R. Reed, who initiated the reform, noted its anti-sprawl impacts: "Many states try to save farmland by buying development rights. That's expensive. Without spending a dime, we are achieving the same goal with a two-rate tax. Unused urban land is what pushes development into open space. This tax, by assuring better use of unused land in cities and suburbs, discourages the gobbling up of farms."

The two-rate tax may be introduced gradually. Initially, Harrisburg used a 3-to-1 ratio, taxing land at a rate three times higher than homes and other structures on the land. As taxpayers and city officials became assured of the good results, they gradually increased the ratio to 4-to-1, then 5-to-1, until it was raised to 6-to-1 in 2002. To state this in dollar terms, homeowners paid $2.44 per $1,000 of assessed value on their land but only 41 cents per $1.000 on their house value.

Sources: City of Harrisburg Business Administrator Napoleon Saunders, 717-255-6470
City of Harrisburg Mayor Stephen R. Reed, 717-255-3040

One Option for Correcting the Local Property Tax To Support Smart Growth and Healthy Neighborhoods

The conventional property tax unintentionally generates land speculation and decay in central cities and sprawl in the countryside. This system undermines useful growth control mechanisms while the tax disincentives are typically overlooked.

The property tax, curiously, is both too low and too high. This is because "the" property tax is really two separate taxes — a tax on land and a tax on the improvements sitting on the land. While a tax on homes, apartments, offices and other buildings adds to their price (one of the barriers to affordable housing), raising taxes on land lowers its selling price.

A relatively low tax on land values translates into excessive prices for central city land, pushing development to the suburbs and exurbs. It enables owners of strategic city sites to keep them idle, hoping to profit eventually from rising land values. Such speculation deters optimal use of close-in neighborhoods where public transportation and other infrastructure can support economic, efficient and rational growth.

How can the property tax be altered to favor beneficial growth patterns and smarter, more compact growth? In some places a two-rate property tax system has been adopted with lower taxes on improvements and higher rates on land values. (This is also called a split-rate property tax). This generates greater revenue while reducing tax bills for a majority of residents and businesses. Those who pay more under the system are those who, knowingly or otherwise, block the healthy growth of communities; these include owners of vacant sites, boarded-up buildings, slums and downtown parking lots.

The following suggested steps may be helpful for those who wish to include local tax reform as part of their smart growth strategy:

- ***Educate** smart growth activists. Many sources can be tapped to learn of local success stories, technicalities of property assessments and tax rates, and useful political tactics[1].*
- ***Analyze** constitutional requirements pertaining to property taxation.*
- ***Win endorsements** from smart growth supporters and the media.*
- ***Conduct studies** of the impact of a two-rate property tax in the target jurisdiction to avoid surprises, which neither politicians nor taxpayers appreciate.*
- ***Push political action**. At the local level, persuade city and county governments, and the local delegation to the legislature, to call for state permission to institute a two-rate tax.*
- ***Seek state action**, with the governor and legislature's help, to either require or permit localities to tax land and improvements at different rates.*

[1]Reliable sources include:
Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 149 Madison Ave, #601, New York NY 10016, 212-683-6424
Center for the Study of Economics, 1422 Chestnut St, #414, Philadelphia PA 19102, 215-988-9998
Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 113 Brattle St, Cambridge MA 02138, 617-661-3016
Center for Public Dialogue, 10615 Brunswick Ave, Kensington MD 20895, 301-933-0277

Case Study
Isles, Inc.

Isles, Inc., has worked for more than 20 years on everything from affordable housing development and job training to community gardening and environmental education in the neighborhoods of Trenton, New Jersey.

Now the nationally recognized nonprofit organization is also embracing regional reform. According to Isles founder and president Martin Johnson, the organization's new regional focus stems from years of watching growing concentrations of poverty in Trenton neighborhoods, the departure of neighborhood leaders for brighter opportunities and the flight of capital from the city and its first-ring suburbs. "Our interventions, while effective, were not changing the broader trends," said Johnson.

In order to change them, Isles has joined with community leaders in labor, churches, business, regional planning and civil rights. Their effort, the New Jersey Regional Coalition, has embarked on a series of regional endeavors, including an analysis of fiscal and social disparities in municipalities across the state. Moving into regional reform requires a big dose of public education, according to Johnson. Isles has held public forums and brought in speakers from other areas of the country to stimulate dialogue in New Jersey and develop a deeper understanding of regional issues. This effort requires the community-based organization to balance its traditional and new roles, said Johnson. "The challenge is to not throw out place-based work as irrelevant or anachronistic. We have to look inward at our community and outward at the broader region at the same time." Isles and the New Jersey Regional Coalition are working with the Metropolitan Area Research Corporation to create statewide map data about the socioeconomic impacts of sprawl on New Jersey.

In addition to its work with the New Jersey Regional Coalition, Isles is also expanding its traditional community development activities to reflect its new understanding of regional connections. Among other things, Isles is moving to create affordable housing in the suburbs and market-rate housing in the city.

Johnson says that the process has actually allowed Isles to keep its traditional focus, "What we discovered was that we couldn't not address the regional issue and still stay true to our mission," He said.

You can learn about Isles at www.isles.org

For more examples of community-based organizations working regional approaches to growth, see the National Neighborhood Coalition's case study book Smart Growth, Better Neighborhoods: Communities Leading the Way.

2. ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS TO SMART GROWTH

A Checklist Overview

This section provides a checklist of issues to assess as a way to determine your neighborhood or community's smart growth progress. As you work through the list, you will be able to identify what components are already present — or lacking — and what facts and figures you'll need to build support for an equitable and responsive smart growth agenda. Once you've completed this process, you should be able answer the question, "**where does my neighborhood fit in a regional picture**?"

The checklist looks at the following issues:

- **A Mix of Housing**
- **Economic Vitality and Fiscal Stability**
- **Variety of Land Uses**
- **Strong Urban Design**
- **Quality Schools**
- **Convenient Transit**
- **Healthy Environment and Public Spaces**
- **Neighborhood Character and Civic Engagement**

We consider each of these issues to be elements of vital, healthy neighborhoods. Of course, this list is not exhaustive. If you think of other elements you'd like to evaluate, we encourage you to use the evaluation method presented here as a roadmap for your own assessments.

Once you've completed the assessment, you may consider many possible strategies for improvement — lobbying the city council for more flexible zoning rules, working with local officials and philanthropists to raise money to preserve a cherished park or historic site, lobbying transportation officials to shift some highway funds to transit projects, or pushing for changes in tax policies.

Evaluating Each Checklist Issue

✓A MIX OF HOUSING: Is the housing in my community consistent with smart growth?

A wide range of housing choices attracts people of all ages and incomes, and helps neighborhoods achieve stable social, economic and racial integration. Without enough choice, neighborhoods suffer regional exclusion that can make them the "poorhouses" of the region. Concentrated poverty

destroys individual opportunity, leads to dramatic increases in health risks and crime, discourages investment and serves as a basis for redlining. On the other side of the issue, nor should neighborhoods become exclusive enclaves with no room for the low- and moderate-wage workers needed in the community.

It's smart growth if your neighborhood has:	**Questions to ask:**
A range of housing types that attracts households at all points in the life cycle.	What are the different types of housing stock (such as detached single family homes, duplexes, apartments)?
	Do local zoning codes allow a mix of housing types?
	Do zoning codes provide for special needs and supportive housing?
	What share of the housing is multifamily?
	Does the zoning map reflect the desired mix of housing? (Are designated lot sizes appropriately sized for the housing type and cost? Are there enough parcels to meet the need for different types of housing? What is already built-out?)
Housing at a range of prices.	What is the median sales price?
	What is the median rent?
	What are the recent trends in housing prices?
	Are there subsidized/public units?
	Does my region have a "fair share" housing program that requires all communities to provide a portion of the region's need for affordable units?
A mix of owner-occupied and rental units.	What percent of units is owner-occupied?

See Appendix: ***NNC case study abstracts — Alliance for Metropolitan Stability***

✓ECONOMIC VITALITY AND FISCAL STABILITY: Is my community's economy and fiscal condition consistent with smart growth?

Although tax policies often lead communities to focus on attracting commercial development, to be stable, a neighborhood needs a mix of jobs and housing within its borders. Even high-end housing alone rarely creates fiscal stability for the long run. Leaders often focus on these things because they understand that a healthy neighborhood requires a strong city tax base. Central cities and older suburbs experiencing high levels of poverty need a fair tax system that allows them to keep their tax rates down and their services high. That can come from either a strong and diverse local resource pool, or a strong revenue — or tax base-sharing system. Without that equal footing, revitalization becomes harder and harder, as neighborhoods fight for a slice of the ever-shrinking fiscal pie.

It's smart growth if your neighborhood has:	Questions to ask:
A mix of jobs and housing.	How many and what mix of jobs does the neighborhood have?
	Are there jobs located near housing?
	Is the level of employment changing over time?
	How does the number of jobs compare to the population?
Tax policies that encourage investment in existing communities.	How do my state's tax policies affect land use patterns?
	Do tax policies reward certain types of development?
Regional tax policies that reduce fiscal inequalities among municipalities.	Would my neighborhood benefit from the split-rate property tax?
	Would my neighborhood benefit from regional tax-base sharing?

✓VARIETY OF LAND USES: Is the mix of land uses in my community consistent with smart growth?

Strong neighborhoods allow people to shop, interact, play and to attend to daily life readily and without being dependent on cars. Regional, city and neighborhood land-use planning can help make these goals a reality, as can strong urban design standards. Land-use planning also offers a way to promote mixed-income, mixed-use communities, and lessen the risk of unintended segregation.

It's smart growth if your neighborhood has:	Questions to ask:
A mix of land uses (including a mix of housing types).	Does my community's zoning code encourage a mix of building types and uses within neighborhoods?
	Does the community have access to special zoning tools like planned unit development (PUD), overlay zones or performance zoning that allow for more flexibility?
	Are there special planning documents-small-area plans, for instance-that supplement the zoning code?
	Are these plans being implemented?
A good balance of land uses compared to the region as a whole.	Does my region have a program of state or regional land-use planning?
	How effective is this program?

✓ STRONG URBAN DESIGN: Is the physical design of my community consistent with smart growth?

An attractive and well-designed neighborhood contributes greatly to the quality of life of its residents. Communities can improve their design by, among other things, requiring or encouraging appropriately scaled buildings, rehabilitating interesting historic buildings and preserving scenic views. The ability to safely walk and bike is an especially important aspect. Sidewalks, bike lanes and paths provide a non-car alternative to meeting daily needs, and help residents to improve their health.

It's smart growth if your neighborhood has:	Questions to ask:
Buildings that are attractive.	Does my community have design guidelines for new construction or redevelopment?
	Does my community have a unique sense of place?
Buildings that are appropriately scaled to the neighborhood's character.	Do my community's zoning rules allow for enough density to encourage walking and biking?
Streets that accommodate cars as well as walkers and bicyclists.	Are there design standards for streets and sidewalks?
	Does my community allow traffic calming?
A network of bike paths and walkways.	What plans does my community have in place for a network of paths?
Disability-friendly design features.	Are Americans with Disabilities Act design guidelines actively enforced?

✓ QUALITY SCHOOLS: Are the schools in my community consistent with smart growth?

High-performing public schools are necessary to enhance the opportunities of neighborhood children. They are also necessary to make a community "desirable," and to attract a range of people at a variety of incomes. Socially segregated schools dramatically diminish the range of life opportunities, while mixed-income schools are highly correlated to academic performance. A growing body of evidence also suggests that students are better served by small schools integrated into neighborhoods — not super-sized campuses far from where they live. Neighborhood schools will not be economically integrated unless the surrounding community is. Therefore, a mix of housing types and income levels is critical to increasing the education opportunities of lower- and moderate-income students.

It's smart growth if your neighborhood has:	Questions to ask:
Schools that meet the education needs of all students.	What is the student to teacher ratio in the schools in our community? How does this compare to other communities?
Schools that are diverse by race and income.	What percentage of the students is eligible for free or reduced-price lunches?
	What is the racial mix of the students?
	How are these characteristics changing over time?
School buildings that fit into the community.	Are the schools situated in the neighborhood so children can walk to them?
	How big are the buildings and their campuses?
	Are there state guidelines dictating the size and layout of new school buildings?
	Are there adequate facilities or does the community rely on temporary or mobile structures?

See Appendix: ***NNC case study abstracts — New Schools, Better Neighborhoods***

✓CONVENIENT TRANSIT: Is my community's transit system consistent with smart growth?

Strong neighborhoods offer a range of transportation choices, including buses, rail, cars, walking and bicycling. Together, they can give residents easier access to jobs, services and recreation within their neighborhood and throughout the region. Access to transit services is especially important in low- and moderate-income communities, where the cost of a car can be too much for many residents. A strong transit system is only possible with regional cooperation to ensure a reasonable degree of population density, without which transit is not economically viable.

It's smart growth if your neighborhood has:	Questions to ask:
Transit services that meet the needs of local residents and employers.	What transit services are available in my neighborhood?
	What share of neighborhood residents don't have cars?
	What are the most common commuting destinations of neighborhood residents?
	Are public transportation systems and facilities accessible for disabled residents?
A fare share of the region's transit (and overall transportation) spending.	How is transit spending distributed around the region?
	How does public funding of transit compare with funding for freeways and other roads?
	Do local governments require land-use and development patterns that can be readily served by public transit?

See Appendix: ***NNC case study abstracts — Bethel New Life, Inc.***
See page 36: ***Washington Regional Network "Metro in Your Neighborhood"***

✓HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SPACES: Is my community's environment consistent with smart growth?

Healthy neighborhoods are home to beautiful open spaces that provide citizens with opportunities for recreation. They also have clean, safe air and water. Regions can ensure that struggling neighborhoods in cities and older suburbs benefit from planned reinvestment — and are not depositories of an unfair share of environmental hazards and pollutants. As well, new neighborhoods on the urban fringe can benefit by preserving important natural features and high-quality agricultural lands.

It's smart growth if your neighborhood has:	Questions to ask:
Attractive public spaces for active and passive recreation.	What percentage of the community's land is parkland?
	How does that share compare with neighboring communities?
	Are parks and recreation areas within walking distance of residential areas and connected to other parks and neighborhoods via trails or bike paths?
Open spaces for habitat.	What share of the community's land is undeveloped?
	Are there regional land-use policies to protect the most sensitive natural areas in the region?
	Do open spaces and protected areas abut compatible land uses? Are they connected to other protected areas via trails, parkways or bike paths?
	Does the community have access to transfer or purchase of development rights programs? How effective are these programs?
Air and water that are safe for human consumption and recreation.	Does the air and water in my neighborhood have significant pollution?
	What policies, if any, are in the place to improve it?

See Appendix: ***NNC case study abstracts — New Kensington CDC***

✓NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: Are my community's cultural assets consistent with smart growth?

An important element of smart growth is developing attractive communities with a strong sense of place. What creates a sense of place? A variety of subtle and non-so-subtle aspects, including ties to history and strong community organizations, can contribute to community pride and help maintain a neighborhood's uniqueness and attractiveness. Healthy neighborhoods have a political environment that supports public participation and values diversity.

It's smart growth if your neighborhood has:	**Questions to ask:**
Buildings and other structures that reflect the community's history.	Are there programs to help finance the adaptive use of buildings?
	Is my community aware of and committed to protecting the unique cultural and historic assets that give the neighborhood its character?
	Do tax and other policies encourage the preservation of buildings?
Public spaces where people can interact.	Does my neighborhood have design guidelines that promote sidewalks and public spaces?
Strong community organizations.	Does my city have a formalized way of interacting with community groups?
	Do neighborhood groups in my city receive any city funding?
Strong civic participation.	Are voting rates in the neighborhood high?
	Does the community have a newsletter or local newspaper with high readership?
Cultural and arts resources and organizations.	Do local government and neighborhood residents support arts organizations that provide programs like concerts, arts and crafts fairs, and after-school arts programs?
	Are there performance venues and exhibit spaces housed in the community? Do zoning codes support this?

See Appendix: ***NNC case study abstracts — Handmade in America***

Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities, Washington DC "Metro in Your Neighborhood"

Transit-oriented development is gaining attention around the country as a valuable way to reduce dependence on cars, boost transit ridership, and build neighborhood-scaled livable communities. In Washington D.C., the Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities (WRN) has developed "Metro In Your Neighborhood," a campaign to educate neighborhood residents, community based organizations and public officials about the benefits of directing new growth into areas around transit stations.

Over the last 30 years, many areas of the city have suffered from disinvestments, while sprawl has continued to spread farther into Maryland and Virginia. As a result, many Washington, D.C. residents don't have access to jobs, shopping or recreation within walking distance of their homes, and many don't feel safe walking in their neighborhoods.

Fortunately, things are beginning to turn around for some areas of the city, with new residents and development returning to urban areas. WRN sees this as an opportunity to make neighborhoods safer and vibrant once again, and with Washington's subway, or Metro, stations as a hub for this new development. Part of the Metro in Your Neighborhood education campaign is a PowerPoint presentation that outlines the importance of transit oriented development and what it means for neighborhoods in Washington, and gives visual examples of what good community design around Metro stations looks like. WRN has developed the following principles to guide development around metro stations:

- *Station areas should offer convenience and a variety of activities. Homes and services should be easily accessible by foot and bicycle.*
- *People should come first in creating places. People should feel safe and welcome on sidewalks and streets, and there should be housing, jobs and services for people of all incomes in our community.*
- *Public spaces should provide inviting connections between Metro stations and the surrounding area.*

WRN has developed design guidelines for the areas around Metro stations that include sidewalks, narrower streets, buildings that face the street with doorways and windows, well-lit village greens and plazas, and open space and parks. They've also compiled a checklist to help residents assess development around Metro stations near them and think about how to improve it. For more information see www.washingtonregion.net, or contact WRN at 202-667-5445.

3. GETTING THE FACTS: INFORMATION IS POWER

"[There are] lots of organizations that go out and do things in their community — it may be anti-hunger work or housing development. What they tend to not feel so comfortable doing is the research and analysis. The private sector understands the importance in investing in R&D but the civil sector has not had that kind of orientation. As a result, we are often treated like the hands down in the neighborhood, doing stuff. … When they [funders] need thinking, they go somewhere else. For us it's very important that community-based organizations not buy that limited expectation of us. We have a lot of important information that we can bring to the table; we have to create the capacity to do the analysis."
— Martin Johnson, Isles, Inc.

The better your data about your neighborhood, the better you'll be able to represent your neighborhood in regional growth discussions. Data is power. Data can help you follow the flow of money and figure out whether your community is getting its fair share. It can help you track the social changes in area schools. It ensures that your decisions are grounded in a comprehensive base of knowledge about your community. **(See page 40: Case Study — *Sacramento Valley Residents for Regional Solutions*)**

Who can help me with the task of finding solid data?

There are a number of ways your organization can get the information it needs to bolster its cause. One is to do it yourself — online information is increasingly available, and can be easily manipulated in a PC spreadsheet. But if you decide to look for help, here are some possible resources.

- **Partner with other organizations in the community that can expand your base of knowledge**. For example, you don't have to learn everything there is to know about transit in your community if you can partner with an existing transit advocacy organization.

- **Consider hiring researchers from area research firms or local colleges and universities.** Faculty and students can provide access to existing research, or may be hired to crunch the exact numbers you need. Local philanthropic organizations may be sources of funding for research projects that add to the community's base of knowledge. In addition, some schools sponsor programs that cover the costs of undergraduate or graduate students to help community groups produce the research they need.

- As part of your advocacy work, consider asking **public agencies** to collect the data you're interested in.

Once you've decided to get the facts, what are some good sources for data?

Here are some good places to start:

- The once-a-decade **U.S. Census** is a treasure trove of information, and at many different levels of detail — from neighborhoods and cities to metropolitan areas and states. You can find out a great deal about your community, everything from the poverty level and tenure of residents to commuting patterns and housing costs. Research libraries stock books with census data going back decades, but much of the data for 1990 and 2000 is accessible on the agency's web site: www.census.gov.

Facts: Information is Power

- Your city's **planning or zoning department** can provide detailed information on the land-use rules that govern your community. Staff may have authored or commissioned their own reports highlighting community trends, and may have calculated census data by neighborhood or other locally recognized planning area.

- Your local **school district** should be able to provide detailed demographic and funding data for your community. Your state department of education should be able to provide similar information for each school district in the state. School data can tell you the share of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches in individual schools or districts, and per-pupil spending in each. School data is especially important because changes in the social make-up of elementary schools provide an early warning signal for the community. When a community's schools begin to become poorer, the community will often follow. School spending information also provides valuable insights into the degree of equity in the state's funding programs.

- Your local or state **Association of Realtors®** should be able to provide relatively up-to-date information on recent home sales in your area. Tracking housing prices, and how they have changed over time, can provide insight into the degree of decline or gentrification in older areas, and the demand for new homes on the urban edge.

- If your community is in a metropolitan area, it will have a **metropolitan planning organization** (MPO) that is in charge of allocating federal transportation funding in the area. It may be a free-standing body, or may be part of a larger organization. The MPO should be able to provide detailed information on plans for highway construction, as well as bike and walking trails. Information from MPOs can help you understand the area's transportation funding priorities, and how much funding is dedicated to automobiles.
  See Appendix: *Metropolitan Planning Organizations*

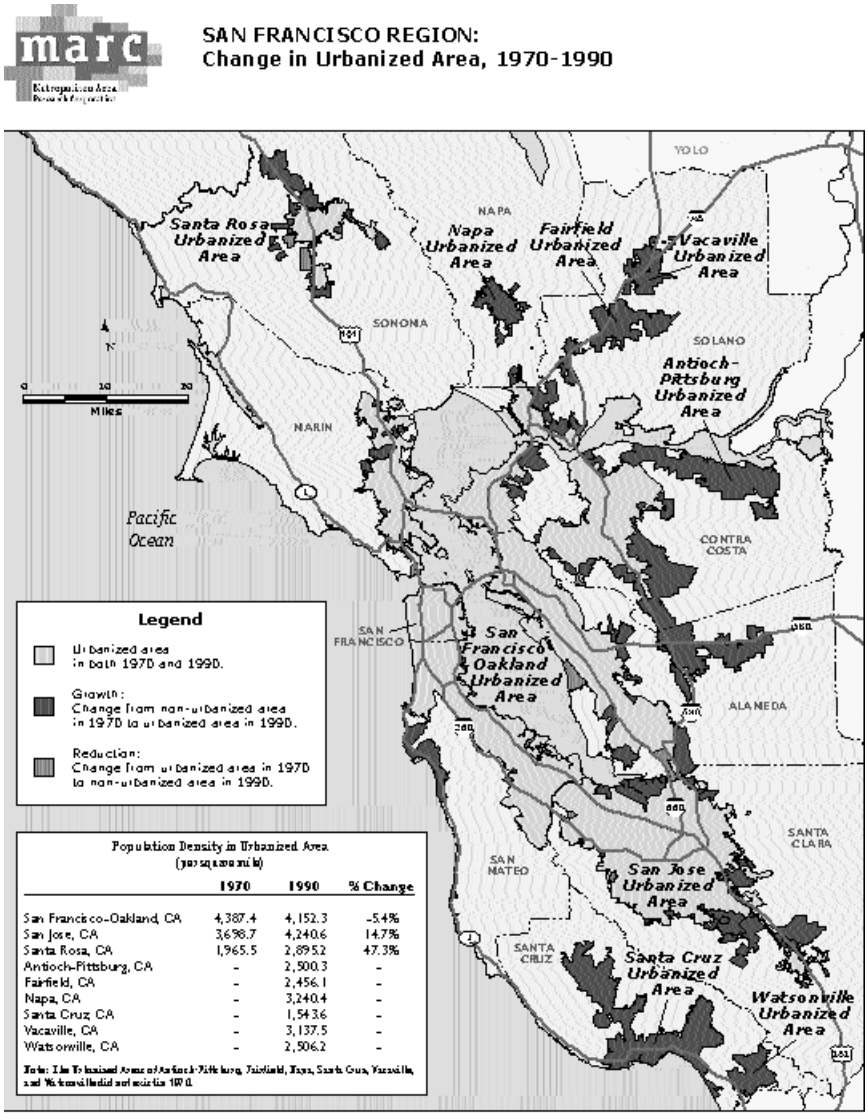
- Your local **public transit operator** can provide information on the level of service it provides in a given community, and on the degree of investment in the region as a whole. It can also tell you about plans for the system in the future. A solid knowledge of a transit system can help you determine the overall usability of the system, and pinpoint any areas that are underserved.

- Check with your **city, county and state governments** for information on local taxes. Every day, more and more information is available online, and often in an easily downloadable format. Tax data will describe the tax bases that communities rely on to fund schools, roads and other basic services. This is especially important to smart growth planning because throughout the nation, growth is producing great disparities in the fiscal capacity of local governments. Most central cities, and an increasing number of older suburbs, are straining to cover the costs of social and physical decline with low- and slow-growing property tax bases. Meanwhile, many local governments on the urban edge are burdened by rapid growth. To cover the costs of new roads, parks and sewers, these governments compete for the high-end developments that contribute more in tax revenue than they cost in public services.

Facts: Information is Power

- **Nonprofit organizations and research centers** are an important source of information about neighborhood and metropolitan trends and issues related to low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. In addition to local nonprofit organizations (environmental groups, public interest organizations, housing and community development advocates) and universities that track local and state issues, nationally based groups like the **Urban Institute** (www.urban.org), **The Brookings Institution** (www.brookings.org), and the **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities** (www.cbpp.org), are valuable sources of information.

- Finally, any of these organizations may be great sources of **maps**. Arguments for smart growth are often well supported by maps because they deal with the geographic distribution of wealth and location and quality of development. Geographic Information Systems (GIS), a computerized mapping technology, offers community groups an ideal way to display data about individual communities — neighborhoods, cities, townships or counties — in a region. Maps are relatively inexpensive to create, easy to reproduce for meetings or presentations, and truly worth a thousand words. Politicians, reporters and community residents may not always read reports, but they will look at maps, again and again. Maps can persuade them.



GIS technology provides a valuable way to show broad community trends, for example, the extent of sprawl in a region.

Facts: Information is Power

You will certainly find additional research sources — this is by no means a comprehensive list. But it should give you a basic idea of the types of information that can help you further a smart growth agenda. Data availability varies considerably by community — in one state you may simply need to go online to download a spreadsheet, while in another you may have to purchase hard copies.

Case study:
Sacramento Valley Residents for Regional Solutions

Issues of smart growth often delve into complex, even arcane, areas of public policy. A firm grasp on the facts is essential for advocates. One good example of how data can help forward a reform agenda is a recent effort to enact tax-base sharing in greater Sacramento, California.

Since the 1978 passage of the property tax reform initiative Proposition 13, California's local governments have increasingly relied on the sales tax to fund services. As a result, attracting retail development has become a focal point for cities.

The places that are especially effective are newer, fast-growing communities with large tracts of developable land. Desperate for sales-tax base, they are willing to offer subsidies, new roads and other incentives to attract large-scale retailers. Such efforts have drawn retailers from central cities and older suburbs, and resulted in a great disparity of the sales tax revenues among municipalities.

The disparities are significant in the Sacramento region, where Sacramento Valley Residents for Regional Solutions, a coalition of neighborhood groups, environmentalists, housing organizations, small businesses and labor led by Sacramento ACORN, has been active in supporting a proposal for sales tax base sharing in the six-county region.

Regional sales tax-base sharing would collect growth in sales-tax revenue and redistribute it within the region on a more equitable basis. The program would help boost the fiscal capacity of declining communities and decrease pressure on growing communities to compete for tax-generating land uses.

In addition to traditional organizing efforts, such as statehouse rallies and blanketing lawmakers with letters of support, advocates armed with data of their own have also been able to talk in some detail about the financial impacts of the program, such as how it would affect the tax revenues generated in individual communities. Their efforts have borne some fruit — despite considerable opposition from sales tax-rich communities in the region, the bill passed the State Assembly and awaits action in the Senate.

4. VISIONING AND PLANNING FOR SMARTER GROWTH

A. Using The Regional Lens To Create A Vision For Your Community

In all likelihood, someone is already planning for the future of your community. It may be a developer, a city planner or an elected official. As a community activist, you should be involved in shaping that future as well. To be able to do this, you first have to be able to see and articulate your own vision for the neighborhood as part of a balanced community and region.

Community Visioning and How It Helps with Smart Growth

Most people have a clear idea of what their community is or what it used to be — the tree lined streets that they grew up with, the local store where they run into neighbors. Today, that same place may be losing residents or businesses, struggling to revitalize itself, and unsure about the changes that new businesses and other development will bring. The challenge is to develop a vision of what a community can be, and relate that vision to regional trends and policies.

Community visioning engages residents and other stakeholders in a process of discussing and determining what important features of their community they want to preserve, such as parks, historic buildings, local businesses and affordable housing options; and what things they want to change, such as better access to public transportation or new commercial areas.

Through visioning a community identifies:

- what it values most,
- what it wants for itself in the future, and
- plans for how to achieve this.

A community visioning process is closely related to community or neighborhood planning. However, a visioning process covers a broader range of issues and community concerns than a plan. It is based in a community's shared values and may act as the umbrella under which a variety of plans can be developed and implemented.

Ultimately, visioning helps the community chart a course for the future in order to gain greater control over growth and development. Visioning is particularly important in communities that are experiencing growth pressures, or that are in an area where local officials or others are considering smart growth measures. It allows residents and other stakeholders to actively plan for what they want rather then merely reacting to proposed or unwanted development.

For the vision to be a useful smart growth tool, the community will also have to examine the impacts of current and future regional growth. When a community establishes its own vision for the future, it has a powerful tool that can be used to express and validate shared community preferences, values and goals.

Visioning with a Twist: Applying a Regional Lens

A typical visioning process uses a series of questions to help residents examine their community. The widely used Oregon Model suggests the following steps[1]:

1. **Where are we now?**
   - This step is used to conduct community-related background research and data collection, and to develop a values statement.
2. **Where are we going?**
   - Residents examine current and projected trends for the community and create a "probable scenario" based on these trends.
3. **Where do we want to be?**
   - Stakeholders create one or more preferred scenarios based on their core values and select a final vision.
4. **How do we get there?**
   - Stakeholders develop strategies for implementing the vision.

Visioning and Smart Growth: One Example

Envision Utah *brought together citizens, business leaders and policy-makers in the Greater Wasatch area to create a strategy to preserve critical lands, promote water conservation and clean air, improve region-wide transportation systems and provide housing options for all residents. See www.envisionutah.org.*

Other models suggest looking at what things would improve the community, or what things the community wants to preserve.

Using a **regional lens** as part of the visioning process changes the focus of the previous questions. While the emphasis is still on how to maintain or improve the neighborhood, the regional lens looks at forces outside of the neighborhood and their impact. The previous sections of this Toolkit have shown us that what is happening outside our neighborhood — in other neighborhoods or at the regional level — matters. Whether it is tax policies, zoning and land use decisions, or transportation and other investments, what's happening elsewhere in your region has implications for your neighborhood and its supply of affordable housing, good jobs, quality schools and other neighborhood priorities.

This doesn't mean that your organization suddenly has to become a regional policy think tank. **Instead, it simply means that you could be more effective by broadening your view of the recurring challenges that affect your neighborhood.** This means looking at whatever your pressing issues are — going back to that vacant lot or the grocery store — and taking a few steps back and asking yourself what the problem looks like when you see it in relation to the neighborhoods, towns, or suburbs next to you and in the surrounding area.

[1] *Organizing Hope: Guide to Community Visioning*, www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/rlc/comm/object.htm.

When you bring the region into the visioning process, the questions listed above change to look something like this:

Where are we now?

- *What are the policies and investments that contribute to the current situation?*
- *Where do the decisions get made that affect this? At the city level? County level? State level? By several different jurisdictions? By the private sector?)*
- *Who benefits and who loses from the way things are now?*

Where are we going?

- *If regional and state trends and policies remain as they are, where will that take our neighborhood?*

Where do we want to be?

- *Which regional and state trends and policies help us? Which hurt us?*
- *What new mechanisms would help more neighborhoods throughout the region?*

How do we get there?

- *What policies must be improved, changed, or introduced to help us do this*?
- *How do we become part of the process by which the decisions are made? Is this a group of people that we normally work with, or do we have to make some new connections?*
- *What is the funding associated with this issue? State transportation funds? Local community development funds? Other funds?*
- *Who else do we need to work with?*

Getting Started

Depending on the size of the community and scale of the project, a visioning process may take a few months to more than a year. The end products of a successful process may include a **vision statement, guiding principles, an action plan and other tools** to help your community articulate and achieve its goals.

Here are the steps to get started on a visioning process.

Assemble a steering committee to guide the process.
Agree to work together.
Agree on process.
Create a purpose statement.
Determine stakeholders and resources available.
Set meeting schedules, times and locations.

As part of getting started, you'll also want to consider some key questions:

- What is your time frame for completing the visioning process and for implementation?
- What will be the main focus or theme?
- What are key issues that the community wants addressed?
- How do these relate to city, county or regional growth strategies and policies?

Tips for an Effective Visioning Process

Finally, here are several tips to make your visioning process more efficient and effective.

- **Graphic tools** are very useful in the visioning process. This may include simple maps, photographs, or drawings of a neighborhood or more complex Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or digital imaging tools.

- **Research existing visioning models and tools**. Whatever model you use, it is essential to have strong stakeholder participation throughout the process, since visioning is meant to reflect the shared values and goals of a community. Without this support, implementation will be difficult.

- Make sure that **adequate outreach** happens before, during and after the visioning process. Use flyers and neighborhood newsletters to alert residents about it before you start. Use mail surveys and stands at local stores or fairs and other events to gather opinions and share alternate scenarios. Follow up with all residents and local businesses to keep them aware of results of the process and plans for and progress on implementation.

- **Financial support** will be essential for sufficient outreach and procuring some of the tools listed above. Local banks, utilities and businesses are potential sponsors. Also, check with your local planning department and city and county agencies that may be able to provide grants.

- **Set up committees or task forces** to examine particular issues or community goals. Many communities include special sessions for youth to express their particular needs and ideas.

- Make sure that the goals of the action plan are **realistic and doable**, and that someone is designated to carry out specific tasks. Set dates for checking the progress of the plan and hold follow-up events with stakeholders to report on progress.

- Get **technical assistance and guidance**. Your state chapter of the American Planning Association (www.planning.org) and your local planning office are two possible sources for technical assistance and facilitators. Experienced planners can help you design a visioning process and assist with meeting facilitation and visioning exercises.

RESOURCES

Web Pages:

Envision Utah, www.envisionutah.org.

National Charrette Institute (NCI), a non-profit organization, trains professionals in the Charrette, a collaborative process that empowers people who are critical to a project to work together and support the results. www.charretteinstitute.org, 503-228-9240.

Organizing Hope: Guide to Community Visioning. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota. www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/rlc/comm/object.htm.

Publications:

Ames, Steve C. *Guide to Community Visioning: Hands-On Information for Local Communities. Chicago*, IL: APA Planners Press, 1998; rev. ed.).

B. NEIGHBORHOODS, REGIONS AND PLANNING

As the previous section points out, your community's vision will be most effective if it acknowledges ties to the larger region. Once you've developed the vision, you'll need plans — neighborhood plans, or larger, city, county or regional plans — to implement it. Community leaders should be aware of city, county and regional planning processes and use the community's vision as a foundation to participate in these planning processes.

State legislation also plays a critical role. Many states now have or are considering measures that affect how communities grow. To be effective, community organizations like yours should learn about how these measures may affect funding sources for community revitalization and affordable housing, and how to take advantage of state and local concerns about smart growth to promote comprehensive community development efforts.

The Value of Collaboration

Too often, planning occurs in response to a problem, such as a plant closing, siting of a "LULU" (locally unwanted land use), or crime and grime. You can help remedy this problem by reaching out to planners and local officials to let them know that you want to be involved in actively planning for the future. Going to a planning office with a completed vision (or inviting planners to help with the visioning process) will show local officials and planners that you have a clear idea of what you want. By proactively involving your community in the planning process and bringing your own research and field information to the table you will begin to build an important relationship with planning staff.

While community members have to provide the input and interest, planners can use their unique skills to provide communities with information, help guide thinking about alternatives, help coordinate the efforts of many players to resolve neighborhood challenges, and maintain a long-term, "big-picture" perspective. Municipal planners, familiar with the workings of local government, can help neighborhood residents see their local concerns in the broader contexts of the city and the region.

Planners can help with plan and grant writing, the use of maps, models and case studies, and appropriate contacts within government agencies and other organizations.

One of the biggest challenges facing neighborhoods is that most do not have any consistent funding for planning at the neighborhood level, or for basic resources, such as computers, printing, publications, conference registration fees, and administrative support to keep things on track. (City planning offices often face the same problem.) For neighborhood plans to be implemented, neighborhoods themselves need more resources. Community organizations also should consider other sources of funding for planning, such as local and regional business and local, state and national foundations.

Research conducted by the American Planning Association and other groups has shown that the best neighborhood and regional plans are developed by informed residents collaborating with decision-makers, service providers, and business leaders in a process designed and facilitated by neighborhood planners.

Types of Plans

There are different types of plans at the city, county and regional level. Work with others in your community to coordinate these different types of plans with each other, as well as across neighborhood/city/region (or town/county/region).

- A **comprehensive plan** is a big-picture plan that provides the framework for neighborhood planning. It is a statement of the city or region's aspirations, much like a neighborhood vision statement. A comprehensive plan provides guidelines for a wide range of "elements" including housing, parks and recreation, commercial strategies, water management, fire protection and historic preservation. Where there are identifiable neighborhoods, a jurisdiction's comprehensive plan should reflect neighborhood plans and neighborhood plans should support the broader needs of the community and region. Once again, states play an important role. If a state does not require cities and counties to follow their own comprehensive plans in their subsequent zoning, policies, and ordinances, then comprehensive plans become "wish lists" of lofty goals with no real teeth for implementation.

- **Functional Area plans** provide greater detail for one of these elements, such as housing, human services, or parks.

- **Neighborhood plans** are a type of **sub area plan**, which are plans for a geographic area smaller than a city or municipal area.

- There are many types of **Special Purpose Plans** that outline local, regional or state plans for specific elements like roads and transit or community infrastructure and lay the groundwork for funding local projects. A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is schedule of local infrastructure improvements, showing the sources of revenue and expenditures by year. A Transportation Improvement Plan or Program (TIP) outlines the funding sources and schedule for various transportation projects. The Consolidated Plan (ConPlan) administered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires jurisdictions to assess their needs and plan for their use of federal housing and community development dollars. The ConPlan brings together the planning, application, and performance reporting requirements of major HUD programs like the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG), Home Investment Partnership Program (HOME), and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA).
  See page 51: Case Study — *Focus, Kansas City, MO*
  See page 52: Case Study — *Asian Health Services, Oakland, CA*

Creating a Neighborhood Plan

Participation and education. If the municipality initiates the planning process, planners should actively solicit neighborhood participation to truly reflect neighborhood needs and interests, and also include residents and community-based organizations as partners in assessing the community and identifying goals. While planners should reach out to residents, it is also up to community residents and organizations to find ways to get involved proactively in planning for the neighborhood.

Effective planning also calls for local governments and larger regional bodies to involve and educate elected and appointed officials and municipal employees about the importance of neighborhood plans and the planning process. Good neighborhood planning requires that the municipality provide regular opportunities, formal and informal, for neighborhood leaders across the municipality to meet among themselves and with local officials to discuss how the implementation of neighborhood planning is going, and to compare progress with their own and the community's overall goals.

City government also should be responsible for establishing citywide goals and criteria for approving neighborhood plans. These criteria should be developed with the participation and support of the neighborhoods. Goals and criteria should address the issue of neighborhood boundaries and how neighborhood organizations are recognized as "official." Finally, city planners can help ensure compatibility among the city master plan, zoning ordinances, Capital Improvement Plan, recreational plans, and other regulations and the approved neighborhood plan.

What to Include. Neighborhood plans and planning should address a wide range of issues, but should be tailored to meet their specific needs.

A definition of neighborhood boundaries — What are the physical boundaries of the neighborhood (streets, water bodies, etc.)? Include a description of how they were derived and how they apply to municipal service areas.
A directory of who is involved and who should be involved in the planning process
A vision statement as developed through a community visioning process (see previous section of toolkit)
Overall objectives for each element of the vision statement
Physical plan of the neighborhood indicating proposed improvements to the neighborhood
Specific tasks and assignments
Design guidelines
Links to citywide planning objectives
A directory of resources
Short-term implementation projects to build support and momentum
Statistics about the neighborhood, including population, employment, education, etc.
Maps showing neighborhood resources such as churches, libraries, parks, historic sites, neighborhood landmarks and characteristics such as demographics
An implementation chart
A date of adoption and date for the next review or update
Statement of acceptance by the municipality

Implementation. Even the best plan is little more than a "dust collector" if it is not properly implemented. Communities that pour time and effort into visioning and planning processes must take equal care to monitor the implementation of a plan. Work with planning staff in your area to follow the plan's implementation and continue the relationship you developed during the planning process. Ask the following questions:

- How disciplined is the city or county when it comes to following through on the policies and projects outlined in a plan? Does the city council pass an unusual amount of zoning changes or variances with little regard to the plan?
- Are the goals and objectives of the plan revisited regularly to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments?

- Is there a forum for regular input with regard to the process and progress of implementation?

How Planning, Regions and Smart Growth Work Together

Neighborhood planning that is not connected to the larger regional planning process will do little in terms of changing the tide of urban disinvestments and suburban sprawl. Nor will it address the inequities between different neighborhoods within a region. Regional transportation, housing and economic development patterns all have important impacts at the neighborhood level. Neighborhood plans should not just be in conformance with regional plans; they should also *inform* regional plans. Neighborhood plans should also agree across neighborhood lines. At the same time, it is important to incorporate neighborhood-level perspectives into decision-making and planning processes, and to make the neighborhood the basic area for needs assessment, provision and improvement.

While planning still tends to be a local rather than a regional process, there are places in the country that are taking a regional approach. There are also regional bodies like regional planning associations, councils of governments, and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) that are encouraging greater coordination among local governments. Some of these organizations have more influence than others. For example, MPOs are responsible for regional transportation planning and have a great deal of influence on the flow of transportation resources.

While regional councils of government are often referred to as "toothless tigers," they bring together local elected officials from across a metropolitan area. Portland and Minneapolis are among the few metro areas that have strong regional governance. Despite varying degrees of political power, all regional planning bodies have the potential to advance equitable, coordinated regional growth. Explore the role that these organizations are playing in your region. They can be valuable allies.

The National Association of Regional Councils has a list of regional councils throughout the U.S. For more information see www.narc.org. The Alliance for Regional Stewardship is a national peer-to-peer learning network of regional leaders, www.regionalstewardship.org.

See Appendix: Metropolitan Planning Organizations

RESOURCES

Organizations:

There are plenty of resources on planning. The American Planning Association's web page (www.planning.org) includes links to planning related resources and state chapter offices. The Planning Commissioner's Journal (www.plannersweb.com), while oriented toward planning commissioners, contains useful information for residents who want to learn more about the planning process. Your own city or county department of planning may have online resources about planning or printed guidebooks to help you with the process.

- American Planning Association, www.planning.org
- Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, www.acsp.org
- Planning Commissioners Journal, www.plannersweb.com.
- Planners Network, www.plannersnetwork.org
- Planetizen, www.planetizen.com

Growing Smart:
Growing Smart is a project led by the American Planning Association (APA) to help states modernize the process of planning at the state, regional, county, and local levels. The *Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook* gives state legislators options to consider in reforming the framework within which planning takes place. It also provides useful information on regional methods like fair share housing and tax base sharing, as well as models useful at the city and neighborhood level. See *www.planning.org/growingsmart*.

Publications:
For more information about the planning process and creating neighborhood plans, see:

Jones, Bernie. *Neighborhood Planning: A Guide for Citizens and Planners*. Chicago: America Planning Association, Planners Press, 1990.

Case Study:
FOCUS, Kansas City, MO

Planning should tie neighborhood visions and priorities to larger land use and transportation policies. In Kansas City, MO, neighborhood residents and city planners are doing just that. The award winning plan ***Forging Our Comprehensive Urban Strategy, or FOCUS****, brought residents into the planning process through a series of workshops and community meetings, with more than 3,000 citizen volunteers contributing more than 20,000 hours to the process.*

The city planning process started in 1992, and was adopted in 1997 after an extensive outreach and involvement process. The results were a Vision for the Future (a visioning document with community principles), a comprehensive policy plan and a number of strategic implementation plans. As part of the physical environment implementation plan the city developed the ***neighborhood prototypes plan****, which consists of recommendations for improving Kansas City neighborhoods and encouraging neighborhood resident partnerships to work on planning issues and city service delivery. A Neighborhood Assessment process helps residents think about the unique needs of their community and to target specific city services to those needs. By the end of 2002 the city will have completed assessments for more than 250 neighborhoods.*

Key neighborhood friendly principles of FOCUS include:

- *Reaffirm and Revitalize the Urban Core*
- *Strengthen Neighborhoods*
- *Create a Secure City*
- *Respect Diversity*
- *Develop Jobs for the Future*
- *Create Opportunity*
- *Build Metropolitan Leadership and Regional Cooperation.*

One example of the types of development taking place as a result of FOCUS is the 39th and Troost Transit Center, which will be completed in 2003. This center is housed within the region's busiest transit transfer station. The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority is working with the City and the KCMC Child Development Corporation to build a childcare facility, office space, an indoor bus passenger waiting area and other amenities to serve the community that uses the station.

Central to the neighborhood-city connection has been the creation of eight FOCUS Centers that allow the opportunity for the community to provide government services. The centers provide information directly to residents about city services and act as community meeting centers. Two of the centers are in schools, and one is in a business-based location.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) play an important role in the other centers. Two are housed in community development corporations; the city provides computer equipment and assistance in determining what kind of services should be provided at each center. Two other centers are located in city-owned buildings along with several other organizations, including CBOs, which contribute to the FOCUS operation. The final center is located in a library and has a number of neighborhood CBOs as partners. All of the centers use neighborhood assessment reports from the area around the center to help identify issues and priorities to address.

For more information about FOCUS Kansas City and the Neighborhood Assessment process and FOCUS Centers, please see the Kansas City Planning and Development Office web page, www.kcmo.org/planning. Or contact Denise Phillips at 816-513-2827, denise_phillips@kcmo.org.

Case Study:
Asian Health Services, Oakland, CA

Organizations and neighborhoods become involved in planning for different reasons. ***Asian Health Services (AHS)*** *is a comprehensive community health center that provides medical care, health education, insurance counseling and client advocacy to the underserved Asian and Pacific (API) population in Alameda County, CA. Their mission is to assure access to health care services regardless of income, insurance status, language or culture.*

AHS became involved in the issues of community planning and pedestrian safety as a public health issue after a tragedy within the community brought the issue literally to their front door. On January 16, 2001, the father of an AHS Board member was hit by a car while crossing 8th Street and Webster Street, where AHS is located. Mr. Hong Yee died four hours later. This intersection is a major thoroughfare for vehicles and is considered a freeway. Community members had been concerned for some time about pedestrian safety at that intersection.

After the accident, AHS decided to embark on a pedestrian safety campaign. AHS youth began documenting their observations at various "hot spot" intersections in Oakland Chinatown, taking pictures, and calculating the required walking speed necessary for making it across the street in time. Compiling their information into a fact sheet, the AHS youth presented their findings to the City Council of Oakland.

As a result, City Council member Danny Wan allocated $80,000 to finding a solution to the pedestrian safety problem in Chinatown. With funding from the City of Oakland and the East Bay Community Foundation, AHS partnered with various local organizations, such as the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, the Oakland Pedestrian Safety Project, and the ethnic press, to help educate residents and drivers about pedestrian safety issues. Julia Liou, executive analyst at AHS, says this was an important coalition-building exercise for the different groups involved. One of the results of their work was the installment of a "scramble" system that includes a phase when traffic from all directions stops and pedestrians are allowed to cross this intersection in a diagonal fashion.

Recognizing that the scramble system is a short-term solution to the pedestrian safety issues in Chinatown, AHS and its partners in the community (Together, AHS, the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, and the Oakland Pedestrian Safety Project (all known as the Oakland Chinatown Coalition) applied for a CalTrans Environmental Justice Grant and were funded to compile a transportation plan for Oakland Chinatown that would address pedestrian and traffic safety issues in a comprehensive manner. The coalition is aiming to complete this plan within the next two years.

Stepping outside the traditional focus of its work enabled AHS to become involved in a larger neighborhood process that will ultimately contribute to the health and well-being of the people it serves. Making this neighborhood of Oakland safe and pedestrian friendly is an important part of maintaining a vital older neighborhood, and helping it accommodate part of the region's growth.

5. BUILDING A SMART GROWTH COALITION

Growth issues are especially compelling areas for collaboration because the problems associated with growth cut across different issue areas (such as housing, jobs and transportation) and are inherently regional in scale. No single community alone can effectively address such problems. Thus, successful outcomes are largely dependent upon coordinated action and responses among a host of communities.

Because of their size and scope, coalitions are far more powerful than any single group. A coalition's coordinated plan and consistent message earns credibility with political leaders and the public. Coalitions offer economies of scale and reduce the duplication of effort that occurs when each organization "goes it alone."

Successful coalitions are the result of hard work and planning. Without those elements, the process of working with other organizations can cause more discord and strife than just going solo.

Listed below are a series of important strategies to keep in mind when striving to build and effectively use coalitions. Some of this is general coalition-building advice; all of it is important for your smart growth coalition. **(See page 58: Case Study — *Coalition for a Livable Future, Portland, OR*)**

Strategies for Success

✓ Choose a structure for the coalition

Although the term "coalition" is often used loosely, in reality there are several different levels of cooperation possible among organizations. The two most common kinds of coalitions are:

- **Single-issue coalitions** are those in which stakeholders join forces in order to achieve a specific objective that requires concentrated efforts, such as a public policy or legislative initiative. These coalitions are marked by short time frames, offer considerable flexibility to members and are narrowly focused on specific results. Rapid communications and fast-track decision-making are of paramount importance.

- **Long-term coalitions** are those in which the focus is on broad-based planning, programming and networking. These coalitions are created to work on a variety of issues over a long time frame.

*Coalition leaders like Vicki Kovari, an organizer for **MOSES**, a faith-based coalition in Detroit, suggest that new coalitions attempt to balance long-term, big-picture goals with short-term, tangible results on specific issues. It is also important to put time into the organization building process at the beginning. Kovari warns that if you don't spend the time building the coalition, the organization will not be strong enough to weather the losses and setbacks that you may encounter.*

✓ Recruit a diverse set of partners

The strength of a coalition comes from its diverse membership. When organizing your effort, be sure to identify a range of potential partners, from your most natural allies to nontraditional

fellow travelers. There is a wide array of possible interest groups to work with in a smart growth coalition — everyone from advocates for the poor to business interests. (See the community assessment guides in the next section of the Toolkit for more information on specific groups that may embrace a smart growth campaign, and the incentives for them to do so.)

Think geographically as well — effective regional coalitions include representatives from cities, suburbs and rural areas. City-suburb relationships, although critical to a successful regional advocacy effort, require special care. Both must see the benefits of participation, immediately and in the long term.

In metropolitan areas, the inclusion of suburban interests, in particular, is critical in building political support for reform. When suburban interests see the value of taking on regional issues, then cross-jurisdiction support for reform becomes possible. As long as smart growth and regional coordination is portrayed as a conflict between city and suburb, the debate is over and lost before it starts.

And, indeed, collaboration on smart growth and other related regional reforms is actually in the self-interest of many suburbs. A growing number of older, inner suburbs are struggling with many of the same strains that have vexed central cities. Meanwhile, many newer, outlying suburbs, stressed by rapid growth taxing their roads and schools and eating up open space, would also gain.

City interests — often disenfranchised and segregated from the region's prosperity — may also need special encouragement. They need assurance that regional cooperation does not dilute their hard-won power. To work, an agenda of regional cooperation should not replace existing urban programs or compete for resources and power. Instead, it should complement those programs, and promise to gradually reduce overwhelming central-city problems and provide the resources for needed revitalization.

Business leaders and organized labor are another beneficial element of a smart growth coalition. Their interests in a well-educated workforce, solutions to traffic congestion and government efficiency can make them a powerful voice for reform. They can also draw the attention of politicians and other decision-makers who might be less sympathetic to advocates from other organizations.

A mix of participants — both by geography and issue area — strengthens coalitions in at least two ways. First, it will help member groups

The Role of the Convener

Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA) is a community-based organization that has been working in Baltimore, Maryland, for more than 60 years around housing, sanitation, crime, and other issues. In 1996 CPHA launched its Campaign for Regional Solutions to begin addressing the regional policies and growth patterns that affect neighborhoods in Baltimore. Since then CPHA has mobilized a regional coalition of several hundred organizations from every jurisdiction in the region to work on more equitable transportation, land use, affordable housing and tax policies for the Baltimore region. CPHA acts as the convener of a variety of strategically targeted constituencies, including community, faith, environmental, civic, and business groups, uniting them around an issue identification process (focused on housing, transit, neighborhood quality of life, drug treatment and sprawl) and a series of events focused on the resulting issue agenda. The campaign included two large Rally for the Region events in October 2000 and June 2002, which brought together over 2,500 citizens to present the issues to elected officials. CPHA then works with these groups toward enacting the agenda, including talking with local elected officials and lobbying state legislators. Matthew Weinstein, CPHA's Regional Policy Coordinator, says that the advantages of this type of organizing include a structure that is less cumbersome and time-consuming to maintain than a traditional coalition, and the ability to pull more groups together quickly.

See Appendices: NNC Case Studies - CPHA

understand the issues they deal with in a more holistic way. Second, it will help them advance their advocacy work by expanding their base of supporters. The Coalition for a Livable Future in Portland, Oregon is a broad network of 60 non-profit and community-based organizations, from affordable housing advocates to the Oregon Council of Trout Unlimited, working together to create a more equitable and sustainable Portland metropolitan region. Jill Fuglister, the coalition's coordinator reported that "it caught people's attention when we started bringing allies from Audubon [Society] and transportation folks to talk about the need for affordable housing. It was really sort of startling."

Paradoxically, **building these rather non-conventional relationships can actually reduce disagreements**. For example, Portland-area affordable housing advocates and environmentalists once clashed over the proposed siting of new affordable housing development on so-called "unused space" — open space that provided useful habitat but was not officially protected. Such conflicts are much more rare now that the groups regularly talk with one another. "When potential issues come up, a lot of trust and strong relationships can help formulate the win-win solutions," said Fuglister.

But win-win solutions won't always happen. The diversity of opinions in a coalition makes it critical to develop a process to work through disagreements. "Everybody is coming at this regional challenge from a different perspective," said Martin Johnson, president and CEO of Isles, Inc, a nonprofit community development and environmental organization in Trenton, New Jersey **(See page 28, Case Study: *Isles, Inc*.)**. Isles has recently expanded its efforts to include regional reform. According to Johnson: "The environmental organizations tend to not quite understand how urban players view them as either hostile or indifferent to their interests. Housing development organizations want to make sure local self-help activities aren't marginalized. You have to create a common systems analysis that enables everyone's particular activities to thrive."

Part of that requires **establishing clear goals and a work plan for the coalition up front**. Those elements can help members think through what's appropriate strategy for the coalition, and what's not. It's also useful to remember that an endeavor that doesn't meet the criteria of the entire coalition may still be appropriate for a member organization to pursue on its own time.

That kind of flexibility is important because members in even the most powerful alliance are unlikely to agree on everything. "We occasionally agree to disagree but we are careful and do the best we can not to undermine each other's efforts," said Fuglister. **(See page 59: *Community Power and Coalition Building)***

> ***MOSES**, the faith-based coalition in Detroit, has been organizing and lobbying to improve transit in the region. As part of their campaign, MOSES organizers made it a priority to speak to 100 different congregations in 100 days. They found that the incentives for involvement differ depending on whether they are talking to a low-wage worker who relies solely on the bus or middle-class commuter who hates having to drive. As a result, they have worked hard to develop "a message that sells with a large cross-section of the community," said Kovari.*

✔ Define common issues

For diverse groups to work jointly, coalitions must set an agenda that is broad and inclusive. In setting the agenda, coalitions should consider the wide range of interests that partners bring to the table, including each organization's goals and broader cross-cutting concerns. While self-interest

can move an agenda forward in the city and stressed suburbs, churches and other faith-based groups — frequent coalition participants — are often the best and most respected vehicles to reach affluent suburban audiences regarding the social justice, race and class components of smart growth.

Janet Milkman, executive director of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania, said that her experience with smart growth advocacy has been that "the voices that get heard tend to be the rich suburban folks who want to stop sprawl. … The flip side is the urban development issues — those [urban] voices are last to be heard and first to be dropped out of any coalition. We are working very hard to make sure that doesn't happen here." Finding common areas of concern for both urban and suburban groups has been the key to this. For example, an agenda that focuses on targeting investments to support redevelopment of older communities promotes revitalization in urban areas and protects outlying areas from new sprawl development.

✔ Work with the media

Effectively working with the media means marketing your coalition's agenda for maximum appeal. Audiences in different types of communities will want to know how they will benefit and how they figure into an overall regional framework. Coalitions can showcase regionalism in ways that resonate with different community types, such as central cities, rapidly growing bedroom communities and affluent suburban job centers.

For **central cities and struggling suburbs**, regionalism generally means enhanced opportunities for redevelopment, and for the low-income residents within these locations, regionalism represents lower taxes and better services. For **rapidly growing bedroom communities**, regionalism is a means for sufficient spending on schools, infrastructure and clean water. And for **affluent suburban job centers**, regional cooperation offers the best hope for preserving open space and reducing congestion.

Some tips for working with the media:

- Newspapers, public radio and public television are excellent places to start your outreach. As with all media, be sure that the information you provide is thorough and accurate.
- Once you have your message honed, approach newspaper editorial boards, which generally have a broad vision for the region.
- Be well prepared when working with local commercial TV outlets. Structure your message so that you have very clear, concise and visual ideas.
- Lastly, make sure that all members of a coalition are informed of the coalition's media messages. Singing from the same songbook is critical to success.

✔ Lobby elected officials

Coalitions are likely to end up lobbying government officials about growth management issues. Coalitions can offer a huge advantage in this forum by serving as a voice for small organizations that would normally not be represented. For example, *10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania* represents more than 200 community organizations across the state on land use issues in the convoluted, sometimes frustrating political environment of the state capitol.

Indeed, tackling regional reforms often means empowering people who would otherwise feel that "I can't act because I don't know enough," said Vicki Kovari, an organizer for MOSES. In taking their lobbying campaign for a Detroit regional transit authority to the Michigan statehouse, "We decided not to be debilitated by what we don't know."

Here are some lobbying tips:

- **Personalize your issues by building relationships with political leaders**. Person-to-person contact is the best way to make sure whatever perceived threat you may be to other constituencies is diminished and your intentions are made clear. At the same time, don't forget that ultimately power, and not personal relationships, will lead to change. Build relationships, but also continue to build your coalition. Relationships can help you gain valuable access, but don't by themselves change policy.
- **Deal with officials on a non-partisan basis.** Meet with all parties, and give them equal access and information. Keep your messages consistent, and never provide inaccurate or misleading information.
- **Learn to deal with controversy, setbacks and conflicts**. Policy reform is tough work. Move on several fronts, and be prepared to shift positions or negotiate in ways that still advance your cause. For example, the Portland coalition started by advocating a mandatory affordable housing plan, but after several jurisdictions sued, they ended up brokering a deal for a voluntary program. This deal was not their ideal outcome, but served as a "placeholder" for further reforms in the future, said Jill Fuglister from the Coalition for a Livable Future. "Given the nature of policy work, the changes sometimes don't seem that significant, but they are."
- Finally, remember that **maintaining a coalition takes work**. Coalition members must share power, build consensus, develop leadership and settle disputes that may arise. Collaboration is time-consuming. Fortunately, there is a growing collection of resources to help. Here are some good places to start:

Bystydzienski, Jill M and Steven P. Schacht, eds. 2001. *Forging Radical Alliances Across Difference: Coalition Politics for the New Millennium*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Cohen L, Baer N, Satterwhite P. 2002. Developing Effective Coalitions: An Eight-Step Guide. In *Wurzbach ME, ed. Community Health Education & Promotion: A Guide to Program Design and Evaluation*. 2nd ed. (pp. 161-178). Gaithersburg, Md: Aspen Publishers Inc.

Couto, Richard A. 1998. "Community Coalitions and Grassroots Policies of Empowerment." *Administration and Society* 30: 569-94. Sage Publications, Inc.

Rich, Wilbur C. ed. 1996. *The Politics of Minority Coalitions: Race, Ethnicity, and Shared Uncertainties*. Westport: Praeger.

Weir, Margaret. 2000. "Coalition Building for Regionalism," in Bruce Katz, ed. *Reflections on Regionalism.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Wolff, T., and Kaye, G., eds. 1994. "From the Ground Up: A Workbook on Coalition Building and Community Development." Amherst: AHEC/Community Partners.

Case study:
Coalition for a Livable Future, Portland, OR

*The **Coalition for a Livable Future**, a coalition of 60 organizations in the Portland, OR area, brings together activists involved in everything from land use, environmental conservation and transit to affordable housing, social justice and inner-city redevelopment "to speak with a common voice" on regional public policy issues.*

The coalition got its start in 1994, when Metro, the Portland area's elected regional government, was updating its Metro Region 2040 Growth Concept. The plan represents the strategies for managing growth in the Portland area in the next decades.

According to coalition coordinator Jill Fuglister, advocates for various issues — already starting to "bump into each other" in the process of lobbying — began to see that a collective effort would increase their influence on this important regional document.

They decided to combine efforts. In that process, in which the coalition members were able to shape Metro's plan in areas including land use, transportation, affordable housing and economic vitality, they also saw the potential for continued cooperation on other regional issues.

And, in fact, nearly eight years later, the coalition's work continues. About half of the participating organizations are associate members — largely small, all-volunteer organizations that lend their support to the coalition's activities and positions, but don't participate in its day-to-day work. The rest are actively involved in the coalition's ongoing activities, everything from studies of regional trends to advocacy for specific regional policies.

Their successes haven't come without effort, though. How to blend individual and coalition work remains one of the coalition's trickiest ongoing issues, said Fuglister. "We decided in the beginning we didn't want to create a new organization." Instead coalition staffers would focus on coordination and building the capacity of existing organizations to do regional work. Sometimes that arrangement works well — for example, when a member agency takes a lead on a coalition effort that it has expertise in. At other times, when no member agency steps up to the plate to lead the group's efforts, it can cause problems.

Despite these difficulties, one of the coalition's most enduring successes has been in providing mutual education to help individual organizations — often focused on one piece of the regional picture — "understand the connections" between their work and that of their fellow members, said Fuglister. "It's understanding holistic solutions as opposed to focusing on a single issue."

Learn more about the Coalition for a Livable Future at www.clfuture.org.

Community Power and Coalition Building

John Aeschbury, lead organizer for Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity (BREAD) in Columbus, OH, says that community advocates need to be more aware of power — who has it and how you get it. Respecting others' power base and taking it seriously is an important part of building coalitions and having an effect on policy. He points out that people come together in coalitions because they can help each other get something they need. Finding out who can help you get something you need within regional growth policies partly means finding out who has different kinds of power, and how you can get, and convince others that you have, power.

Part of working with others to build a coalition and moving your agenda is analyzing the power dynamics in your community and region. A power analysis helps the residents and organizations within your own neighborhood think strategically about which other organizations, institutions, or individuals can be valuable allies.

Community organizations and advocates will need to think about power on two levels:

- Who are the organizations, businesses, institutions and individuals that wield power within your community?
- Who are the organizations, businesses, institutions and individuals that are recognized as powerful within the larger region of which your community is a part?

The objective of thinking about power is twofold: to gain more power for your own community or organization and to form coalitions with those who do have power. Ultimately, the goal is to secure changes in policy or distribution of resources so that all communities within a region are winners.

There are different perspectives of power and what it means in terms of organizing for change[1]. Whatever model you choose, it helps to begin by examining the community's perceptions about power with regard to regional policies and what that means for neighborhood issues. The following steps are taken from Module 5 Community Level Power Analysis from the Community Change Education Project[2]. They are meant to be a general guide for community groups for mapping perceptions of power within a community. They should be adjusted depending on the specific situation of the community.

- *Determine the Issue* — How do differences in power between communities or organizations within a region affect a specific issue or project that the community wants to address? (For example, improving transit access, preserving affordable housing, changing neighborhood zoning codes, or developing a new shopping area) How do residents of the community interact with and feel about their relationship to a specific government body or organization?
- *Locate and bring together the community of interest* — Who is interested in this particular issue or project? Who has an interest? That is, who will be affected by the exercise of power on this issue (whether or not they are aware of that interest)?
- *Elicit perceptions about power* — Find out how the community feels about power. This can be done through mail surveys or at community meetings. Questions to ask include "When you hear the word power, what images or ideas come to mind?" Use this to draw out different people's perceptions form a composite definition of power. Then talk to people about their own individual experiences.

[1] See Stall and Stoecker, "Community Organizing or Organizing for Community? Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment."

[2] See Brutus, *Community Change Education Project*

- *Map the perceptions* — Use a flip chart or wall map to write down the key organizations, institutions, and agencies that people mention when sharing their own anecdotes. Then summarize the interactions that people describe and the quality of the interaction and write these down too and show the connection between the experience and the particular organization or agency. Organize the interactions by type and divide them into summary categories to make the map simpler to read.
- *Interview, revise and narrate the map* — Give people a chance to review the map to make sure their perceptions and experiences are represented accurately. Also take some time to ask the following question and revise the map as necessary:
  Is the map complete? Are there other organizations, agencies, institutions or individuals not listed on the map that exercise power over the circumstances of our community? Are the connections that we've drawn between the experiences and the organizations/agencies/institutions and the evaluations of the experiences defensible?
- *Test the map* — The group or groups that draw power maps should reconvene periodically to review the maps. The purpose of this is to give participants a chance to test the map against real life — is the map (or maps) that the group has created reflected in their daily interactions with organizations, institutions, other groups, etc.? Have their interactions changed at all? Testing the map moves people toward action and organizing because thinking about how and why power is being exercised helps people change the way they interact, and thus have an impact on the exercise of power.

The process of mapping or analyzing power, whether done with the above method or some other way allows communities to move to the next step of reaching out to and building coalitions with those with beneficial power and finding ways to impact or change those with potentially harmful power. See Part IV.5 Building a Smart Growth Coalition and Part V Constituencies: Community Assessment Guides for more information about coalition building and reaching out to new partners.

Other Resources

Alinsky, S. (1972). Rules for Radicals. New York: Random House.

Fisher, R. & Ury, W. (1991). Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In. New York: Penguin.

Stall S. and Stoecker R. (1997). "Community Organizing or Organizing for Community? Gender and the Crafts of Empowerment." Adapted from presentations at the annual meetings of the Midwest Sociological Society, and the American Sociological Association, and COMM-ORG: The On-Line Conference on Community Organizing and Development. *http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers96/gender2.html*.

Warren, D. & Warren, R.B. (1977). The Neighborhood Organizer's Handbook. University of Notre Dame Press. *See chapter on "How to Diagnose a Neighborhood*."

Brutus, C. (1998). Community Change Education Project. Madison, WI: Department of Agricultural Journalism, University of Wisconsin-Madison & Extension. *See "Module 5: Community Power Analysis."*

Comm-Org — An on-line conference on community organizing and development, comm-org.utoledo.edu.

PART V

CONSTITUENCIES:

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDES

1. Civil Rights Organizations
2. Community Action Agencies
3. Community Development Agencies and Housing Authorities
4. Community Development Corporations and Intermediaries
5. Community Organizers
6. Community Schools Advocates
7. Environmental Justice Organizations
8. Environmental Organizations
9. Faith Based Organizations
10. Farm Preservation Groups
11. Historic Preservationists
12. Labor Unions
13. Local Government Bodies
14. Neighborhood Associations
15. Public Health Advocates
16. Rural Non-farm Communities
17. Transportation Advocates

Community Assessment Guides

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDES

If you're going to be working in a coalition, you'll be working with some new partners. NNC has created a series of **Community Assessment Guides** to help organizations reach out to new partners to work on regional growth and equity issues. Each guide provides important background information about key constituencies, such as environmentalists, public health advocates, community development corporations, and historic preservation groups.

Use these guides to :

- Uncover the key issues these organizations typically work on.
- Find out how to reach out to an organization by showing how their issues mesh with smart growth concerns.
- Learn how to find local representatives in your area.

Creating Your Own Community Assessment Guides

While we have included a number of key players here, the list is not exhaustive. So we've also provided a template so that you can create your own guides for other constituencies in your community and region. Just copy the template on the following page to get started. Your guides don't have to be as extensive as the ones we've provided here. But by asking the questions on the following page you will gain a better understanding of the organizations that you are trying to reach out to and you may find some new partners to work with.
Some groups that you may want to consider in your own neighborhood, town, county, region, or state may be:

- *Bankers and other lenders*
- *Affordable housing organizations*
- *Crime prevention advocates*
- *Community gardeners and urban open space advocates*
- *Private developers*
- *Immigrant services groups*
- *Community foundations*
- *Aging-related organizations*

Community Assessment Guides

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE TEMPLATE

Use this template to analyze other organizations and constituencies in your neighborhood and region.

Who They Are

- Who does this organization or group represent? Where do they work (in urban areas? rural areas? suburbs? throughout the state?)
- What do they do? — what are their primary mission and goals?
- What is their structure? — are they a formal organization with a board or directors and president? An informal group? Are they a nonprofit, a private organization or a government agency? Are they organized at the local, state or national level? Is it one organization or do they have affiliates or partners?

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

- Key issues for this constituency (such as jobs; environment; housing; race).
- Current involvement in smart growth (coalitions, legislation, other).
- Constituency continuum - Does this constituency have representatives throughout the metropolitan area and in rural areas? Are there differences in the way they approach issues, based on where they are located (urban vs. rural)? Are there differences based on income level or ethnicity represented?

Reaching Out

- How can smart growth promote this constituency's key issues? How do the National Neighborhood Coalition's Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth and the Smart Growth Network's Principles address the key issues of this group. What are the linkages between this group's core concerns and the concerns of smart growth organizations (such as workforce development, housing preservation, aging in place issues, etc.)?
- How will the smart growth movement in your area benefit from their involvement?
- What are areas of agreement with smart growth advocates and potential areas of tension or disagreement (hot-button issues)?
- Who are this group's traditional allies and partners?
- What is the bottom line? What do these groups have in the way of resources and what they can bring to table, (such as people; money; clout; media exposure)?

Finding a Local Representative

- Local, regional, state office or contact information for national organizations

Civil Rights Organizations

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

Who They Are

Civil rights organizations work to promote equality of opportunity in housing, education, employment and equal treatment in the administration of justice, regardless of race, sex, handicap, religion, age, sexual orientation and national origin. These organizations work in communities throughout the country, on a wide range of issues including affirmative action, fair housing, hate crimes, education, disabilities, immigration, labor, voting rights, and census issues. Organizations range from national groups like the National Urban League and the American Civil Liberties Union, to state and local affiliates of national organizations, to independent local church and faith-based groups, and nonprofits.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Civil rights organizations work on a broad range of issues related to discrimination. They also work to protect freedom of speech and other basic rights laid out in the constitution, for example, the National Urban League focuses on expanding opportunities for African Americans; the American Civil Liberties Union works to protect those rights laid out in the Bill of Rights; and the National Organization for Women is dedicated to promoting the rights of women.

As concern about the environmental effects of sprawl and regional growth have increased, so has knowledge about the negative social impacts of sprawl. Some experts now look at sprawl as a civil rights issue as much as an environmental one. Studies suggest that sprawl has had disproportionate negative impacts on the poor and people of color living in cities and older neighborhoods. The land use and transportation policies that encourage the increased spreading out of housing and commercial development into far-flung suburbs also pull investment, jobs and families out of older urban and suburban communities and small towns. Transportation policies that favor new road and highway development over public transportation often end up cutting off workers in older neighborhoods from employment opportunities in fast growing job centers. Zoning and land use policies promote new housing and new schools in new suburbs over revitalization of exiting areas. Zoning codes may prohibit or discourage denser, and more affordable, multi-family housing in suburban areas. The result is economic and racial segregation of housing and schools.

When it comes to sprawl and the alternatives found within smart growth, there are some specific issues that are relevant to civil rights organizations:

- **Housing** – fair housing enforcement, as well as more widespread affordable housing opportunities.
- **Schools and education** – access to quality education and the elimination of de facto school segregation as a result of sprawl-induced residential segregation.
- **Transportation** – access to good jobs, services, recreation and other life necessities via increased transportation options, including public transit.

Civil Rights Organizations

- Environmental justice – ameliorating environmental health hazards, such as poor air and water quality caused by high traffic, brownfield sites and illegal trash dumping sites in older communities and communities of color.

Despite the many connections to sprawl, the civil rights community appears to be engaged in these debates primarily at the academic level. State and local organizations may be working on specific issues related to sprawl and smart growth, such as housing or schools, but there does not appear to be widespread participation of local or national civil rights organizations in coalitions around growth issues at this point.

Reaching Out

Smart growth has the potential to create new land use and transportation policies at the local and regional level that increase opportunities for all residents. NNC's Neighborhood Principles for smart growth stress the importance of the equal benefits and responsibilities of growth for all communities within a region. They also promote the role of low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in regional growth decisions and explicitly address the need to promote racial and economic integration.

Mayor William Johnson Jr. of Rochester, NY says that "creating stable, mixed-income neighborhoods throughout a metro area will do more for civil rights and economic justice than just about any other reform."

While the Smart Growth Network principles do not directly address integration, they do promote wider opportunities in housing and transportation. These two sets of principles provide opportunities to engage civil rights advocates on key growth-related issues: housing, schools, economic opportunity, transportation and environmental justice. Policy changes to improve housing options throughout a metro area would go a great way towards making growth more equitable.

The smart growth movement in turn benefits from a broader coalition that addresses the social implications of sprawl. They can gain the political support of urban and older suburban communities and leaders by making smart growth more inclusive of civil rights issues. One potential area of tension for smart growth advocates is the concern by some minority leaders, particularly elected leaders in urban centers, that involvement in regional growth coalitions may dilute the political power base of minorities in core urban and older suburban communities. However, some leaders in the civil rights arena argue that a regional approach is the only way to achieve equitable growth.

Civil rights advocates traditionally work with other social justice organizations, such as fair housing advocates, labor unions, community organizers and faith-based groups. Reaching out to these allies may be a way to bridge the gap between smart growth activists and civil rights organizations. Ultimately, smart growth organizations must make this connection to gain the support of urban communities. The high profile of organizations like the NAACP and ACLU can also generate greater media and public awareness to sprawl, its relationship to civil rights, and the need for smarter growth.

Civil Rights Organizations

Finding a Local Representative

- **National Urban League**, 212-558-5300, www.nul.org, links to local affiliates in 34 states and the District of Columbia.
- **The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights**, www.civilrights.org. Includes the National Civil Rights Directory, with links to state and local civil rights organizations.
- **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People** (NAACP), 410-521-4939, www.naacp.org. Links to state and local branches.
- **National Council of La Raza**, 202-785-1670, www.nclr.org. Has affiliates across the country serving the Hispanic community
- **AARP** (formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons), 800-424-3410, www.aarp.org. Links to state chapters.

Other Resources

Organizations

- **Applied Research Center**, 510-653-3415, www.arc.org. Public policy, educational and research institute whose work emphasizes issues of race and social change.
- **Institute on Race and Poverty**, 612-625-8071, www.umn.edu/irp. Information on issues confronting communities facing the combined challenges of race and poverty.
- **Poverty and Race Research Action Council**, 202-387-9887, www.prrac.org. Links social science research to advocacy work in order to successfully address problems at the intersection of race and poverty.

Publications

Bullard, Robert; Johnson, Glenn; and Torres, Angel. (2000). *Sprawl City: Race, Politics, and Planning in Atlanta*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Hayduk, Ron. (2000). "Regionalism and Structural Racism." A paper prepared for The Race and Community Building Project of The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives.

powell, john; Kearney, Gavin; and Kay, Vina. (2001). *Linking Housing and Education Policy*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Johnson, William A. Jr. (2002). "Sprawl as a Civil Rights Issue: A Mayor's Reflections." A discussion paper presented by the George Washington University Law School, Center on Sustainable Growth.

Rusk, David. (1999). *Inside Game/Outside Game: Winning Strategies for Saving America*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Weir, Margaret. (1998). "Race and the Politics of Metropolitanism." A paper prepared for The Race and Community Building Project of The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives.

Community Action Agencies

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

Who They Are

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) are grassroots agencies that focus on eliminating poverty. The first CAAs were formed during President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. CAAs help people to help themselves in achieving self-sufficiency. They provide a "safety net" for low-income people in crisis, providing education and training opportunities as well as many other services. CAAs work in urban, suburban and rural communities.

There are approximately 1000 agencies across the country, in every state and territory. They vary in size from serving one jurisdiction to serving many. They are flexible, so they can address the needs of the communities in which they work. Once needs are identified at the local level, the CAA designs programs to meet those needs. Therefore, an agency may operate a few programs or more than 30, depending on their size, capacity, funding and community need. CAAs serve all age groups and are non-discriminatory.

CAAs are governed by tripartite boards of directors consisting of at least one third low-income people, one third representatives of the local jurisdictions they serve and the remainder representatives of the community at large (this might include ministers, bankers and businessmen, community activists, etc.). This board composition is mandated by federal law. More than 88 percent of CAAs are private non-profits; the rest are entities of local government. Community Action Partnership serves as the national association, providing training, information and support to local agencies.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

CAAs are concerned with any and all issues that impact the poor. Again, how active they are in any given issue area is dependent on their capacity, funding level and need. Typically, CAAs are concerned with issues such as affordable housing, homelessness, community economic development, child care and development, health, and job training and placement.

Some CAAs are quite involved in Smart Growth issues. For example, a CAA in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV), has been very involved in promoting equitable regional development. CACLV worked with the region's corporate leadership to develop a strategic plan that recognizes the interdependence between cities and the surrounding region, and which promotes development that is good for low-income communities.

With smart growth, as with other issues, approaches and priorities may vary between urban and rural agencies because of differences in their constituents' needs. The common link is that their service is directed to low-income individuals, families and communities.

Community Action Agencies

Reaching Out

CAAs are comprehensive in their approach and partner with many organizations, including faith-based organizations, to accomplish their goals. CAA executive directors or their designees often sit on other organizations' boards as well as serving as a resource for their local jurisdictions and elected officials at the local, state and national levels. CAAs also participate in local Workforce Investment Boards, which provide employment and training services.

CAAs are grassroots organizations in nature but are collaborative as well. The smart growth movement can benefit from their involvement because of the CAAs' partnerships and outreach into communities. CAAs have excellent working relationships with their local and state governments, the business community, community leaders and advocates, religious organizations, education advocates, labor and others. Because of this, CAAs can bring people, clout, media exposure, volunteers and some limited financial resources to the table. In addition, CAAs can provide a wealth of knowledge through up-to-date needs assessments and other statistics concerning their service areas. Many smart growth-related issues impact lower- to middle-income residents of a community. Transportation and housing in particular are potential areas of agreement and collaboration between CAAs and smart growth advocates.

Finding a Local Representative

Locate a local CAA by contacting the Community Action Partnership, 202-265-7546, www.communityactionpartnership.com. You can also contact your state Office of Community Services, which administers the Community Services Block Grant funds that serve as the core funding for local community action agencies.

Community Development Agencies & Housing Authorities

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND HOUSING AUTHORITIES

Who They Are

Housing authorities and commissions, state and local community development departments, and redevelopment agencies are all central to creating more vibrant, livable communities. These public agencies and nonprofit organizations work to create community and economic development and affordable housing opportunities and services that create safe, viable communities for all Americans, particularly those of low and moderate incomes. These agencies may be housed at the city, county, or state level government, within the planning department, or may be a separate government unit. They are present in urban, suburban and rural communities.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Overall, community development agencies and housing authorities are seeking ways to increase the supply of affordable housing, provide public facilities and economic development services to the low- and moderate-income households they serve. Specific issues that are a major focus of these agencies and which relate to smart growth include affordable housing (including location efficient mortgages, appropriate densities, and community development block grants, economic development and redevelopment (including office park development and downtown revitalization), public housing programs, Section 8 housing vouchers, and HOPE VI.

- The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a HUD program that provides funds for community revitalization efforts, with the stipulation that 70percent of funds go to programs that benefit lower-income people. Cities with more than 50,000 people and urban counties with more than 200,000 people automatically receive CDBG (these are known as entitlement jurisdictions). States also automatically get CDBG money to distribute to small towns and rural counties. CDBG is a block grant that has multiple eligible activities that can support smart growth efforts.

- HUD's Section 8 program, now known as the Housing Choice Voucher Program, is a housing subsidy program that provides vouchers to help residents who are relocating from public housing (because of demolition), or to support welfare recipients.

- HOPE VI is a HUD program that provides funds to housing authorities for the demolition and rehabilitation of severely distressed public housing. This program has been somewhat controversial because of concerns about displacement of residents. HOPE VI has received favorable reviews by some groups because of its "new urbanism" approach that uses low-rise and townhouse-style designs and mixed-income criteria in place of the high-rise apartment blocks of past public housing.

Community Development Agencies & Housing Authorities

At the local level advocates can work with CDBG agencies and local housing authorities to find creative solutions to livability issues, such as coordinating CDBG funds with other programs to create affordable housing opportunities in close proximity to public transportation and job centers. Depending on state and local planning regulations, some agencies will be more involved in regional or smart growth efforts than others. Rural agencies may be less involved. But if they are in a state or county that has enacted smart growth or growth management legislation, or in an area that is considering such measures, they will be acutely aware of concerns about the effects of growth controls on housing affordability.

Reaching Out

Because housing authorities and community development officials must balance the various elements of local needs, they offer a unique perspective on addressing regional growth issues. The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), which represents many of these agencies, says that growth issues continue to be a major concern for their members. In general, these agencies support efforts to control growth in a way that balances the various needs of local communities. They are a potential source of political support and research on issues like economic development, housing affordability, and the connections between affordable housing, jobs, and transportation.

Housing and community development agencies that are not actively involved in regional efforts or smart growth efforts may not be because they view these as issues related to "land use" rather than providing affordable housing and services. To better connect with these agencies, pointing to smart growth principles like creating a range of housing opportunities and choices, mixing land uses, and providing transportation choices so they can understand this connection. Growth that better integrates (affordable) housing with transportation and job opportunities ultimately provides better choices to their clients and contributes to more vibrant, viable communities. NNC's Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth further promote growth that is fair and that meets the needs of neighborhood residents. Mixed-use development provides access to a range of communities' needs – commercial space, job sites, schools, and services.

Finding a Local Representative

There are more than 1,200 state and local community development agencies across the country, and over 3,000 housing authorities. Contact your city or town government to determine the structure of various housing and community development agencies and to find out if duties are replicated at the town or city and county levels. You can also find out when regular meetings are held and get copies of any plans for future development as well as policies regarding regional growth and community development. This will help you determine the agencies' priorities.

Community Development Agencies & Housing Authorities

Other Resources

- **The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO),** 202-289-3500, www.nahro.org. NAHRO is the nation's oldest and largest association of housing and community development professionals and policy makers. Contact the NAHRO national office to identify a NAHRO member in your region or local area.,.

- **The National Community Development Association (NCDA),** 202-293-7587, www.ncdaonline.org. NCDA is a national association whose members consist exclusively of local community development agencies

- **The Council Of State Community Development Agencies (COSCDA**), 202-293-5820, www.coscda.org. COSCDA is the primary contact for state level community development, housing and economic development agencies.

Community Development Corporations & Intermediaries

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Who They Are

Community Development Corporations (CDCs) are non-profit organizations that derive their leadership and governance from residents and other key stakeholders in the communities they serve. Consequently, CDCs are in a unique position to assess local needs and tap into local resources. CDCs are found throughout rural and urban America, concentrated in moderate to low-income communities. It is estimated that there are 3,600 CDCs in the United States. They are indigenous, entrepreneurial and committed to economic investment in their areas. There are also a range of intermediary organizations at the national, state, and local levels that support CDC s by providing funding, training and technical assistance.

CDCs take a comprehensive approach to the revitalization of depressed communities, combining housing production and economic development with an array of social supports and community building efforts. Activities include housing, commercial and industrial development and financing to advocacy and organizing to job training, childcare, and youth programs. CDCs vary in size, capacity, and focus. Some CDCs are engaged in job promotion and creation and housing, while others focus on commercial development. Despite the differences among individual CDCs, all share the common mission of creating wealth, building healthy and sustainable communities, and achieving lasting economic viability.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Key issues for CDCs and intermediaries include workforce development, homeownership, rental housing production and management, community building, small and micro-business lending, commercial and industrial real estate development, and comprehensive community revitalization strategies. CDCs firmly believe that community revitalization is a combination of human and physical development.

CDCs have historically been engaged in aspects of smart growth activities due to the nature of their work, though they typically don't think of their work as "smart growth." For instance, many CDC projects require the use and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure and housing stock. Some CDCs work to reclaim abandoned lots to create green spaces, such as community gardens, parks, and side yards. CDCs also work to revitalize brownfields — former industrial or commercial properties that have real or perceived environmental contamination and are abandoned, blighted, or underutilized — for housing or commercial development. CDCs use local, state, federal and private resources to create affordable housing, and develop commercial real estate in order to create jobs and bring wealth into the community.

Revitalization efforts can be more complex in rural communities. Rural CDCs may need to be more self-reliant than CDCs located in urban areas because of funding challenges and less extensive

infrastructure in those communities. Rural communities tend to have a smaller tax base that decreases the level of subsidy a community can provide. Rural areas often lack skilled CDC employees, although this is also a problem in urban areas. They also have smaller banks that can be less comfortable with the types of flexible financing community development may need. The combination of these factors results in a more complex set of challenges concerning community economic development in rural areas.

Reaching Out

Smart Growth advocates can take advantage of the fact that CDCs already engaged in "smart growth" development are potentially ready allies, though more can be done to show how their work is complementary to smart growth. Smart growth tools like transit oriented development, "walkable" neighborhoods, increased density, improved public transportation all contribute to a community's livability, and help meet community development objectives. Many CDCs have experience with rehabilitation/reuse and infill projects. CDC staff have a history of expertise in financing and developing the types of small-scale projects that can work well in transit-oriented developments and infill settings.

Many groups engaged in community development are recognizing a need to move to more comprehensive and regional solutions, which incorporate a range of issues. You can work with CDCs to help them understand the need to move beyond strategies based on a competitive city or neighborhood to metropolitan or regional perspective. Sustainable community development means working with a host of partners to find regional solutions to the macro problems of transportation, education, job creation, crime, and health and day care.

Though the "smart growth" movement and regional solutions dialogue has been evolving over the past five years, the voices of lower-income people and people of color are not always present in the planning and the debates. Community development organizations can embrace the smart growth movement as a new way to promote and revitalize our inner cities and small towns, as well as to increase allies, build coalitions, and achieve social equity and economic justice for its constituencies.

Potential areas of tension between CDCs and other smart growth advocates may center on the issues of gentrification and displacement of long-time residents, historical preservation statutes that may lead to higher housing prices, and the preservation of land that results in a loss of employment. There are ways, however, to assure that affordable housing is preserved, current residents are not displaced, and comprehensive growth strategies provide an adequate supply of affordable housing throughout a region so stable mixed-income communities flourish. Community-based development practitioners can be the voices that can articulate the vision that affordable housing is smart growth. Community-development practitioners should be at the table when exclusionary development practices are evaluated, when compact development is considered, when mixed-used development and transportation decisions are made, and when public facilities budgets are passed.

Community Development Corporations & Intermediaries

Typically, allies of CDCs are housing advocates, community development advocates, bankers, foundations, city and state government, contractors, and developers. CDCs will not necessarily bring tremendous financial support to the table; however, many CDCs are well-established and powerful in the communities they serve and have political clout. They have a diverse network of allies, including community residents and organizations, and many have a strong, proven track record of successful revitalization efforts.

Finding A Local Representative

National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED) is the national trade association for CDCs with approximately 600 member CDCs. Their web site includes links to state associations of community development organizations. 202-289-9020, www.ncced.org

Other Resources

Enterprise Foundation, 410-964-1230, www.enterprisefoundation.org.Works with local partners to provide affordable housing, jobs and child care support. Helps strengthen nonprofit organizations working in community development.

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), 212-455-9800, www.liscnet.org.LISC provides grants, loans and equity investments to CDCs for neighborhood redevelopment. Web site includes contact information for local program offices.

Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, 202-220-2300, www.nw.org. NRC supports innovative local partnerships of residents, businesses, and government, collectively known as the NeighborWorks network, and by advancing broader community development goals.

Rural LISC, 202-739-9283, www.ruralisc.org. Works to build the capacity of resident led rural community development corporations.

Community Organizers

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

Who They Are

Community organizing is a social change strategy by which disenfranchised people re-engage in civic life, and redefine their own relationship to people in positions of power. At the core of organizing is building a cadre of community leaders accountable to their community, capable of defining their self-interest, and exercising power in increasingly complex situations. The goal of organizing, from the perspective of a community organizer, is the organization. Community organizing groups amass power by building their membership. The most important aspect of organization building is leadership development, but the power an organization can wield depends on its size and its reach as an organization.

Community organizing groups come in many shapes and sizes. Typically, community organizing projects are either institution-based or individual-membership-based. Institution-based organizing projects are typically congregation-based coalitions with a leadership structure that involves lay leaders and pastors in the day-to-day decision-making and strategic planning of the organization. Individual membership-based organizing projects are collections of individuals, typically low-income leaders in their neighborhoods. Both kinds of projects can be found in large metropolitan areas as well as rural communities.

Community organizing groups, at their best, are democratically run, and are volunteer-led. Strategic decisions are made internally through clear and accountable processes, and reflect the identified self-interest of the organization. Groups are conscious of their limited resources, and of the capacity of their membership. community organizing groups often work in partnership with other organizations and are very interested in ensuring that tangible benefits return to their membership as a result of such work.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Most community organizations are multi-issue They choose issues and campaigns through internal democratic processes, and are driven by the identified needs of their membership. Having said that, there exists an enormous amount of organizing in the following issue areas with a clear connection to smart growth principles.

Affordable Housing. Across the nation, many low- and moderate-income families are finding it difficult to cover the explosive cost of housing in their neighborhoods. Grassroots organizations are fighting to protect and preserve affordable private-sector and public and assisted housing in their communities. Many of these organizations, including congregation-based groups fighting to increase the supply of affordable housing by advocating housing trust funds and inclusionary zoning policies. Many are also affiliated with the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign, which seeks to create a permanent source of public revenue to support the production and preservation of affordable housing. Many smart growth advocates have also endorsed the National Housing Trust Fund.

Community Organizers

Transportation Equity. Many families lack transportation options to get to jobs and services due to limited public transportation service whether they live in rural or urban areas. In many metropolitan areas, poor transportation planning has allowed new job growth to explode beyond the reach of low-income families. Community groups are organizing to improve transportation planning processes so that the needs of low-income communities are addressed and development may be harnessed to community-based land use strategies.

Workforce Development. Under the Workforce Investment Act, which Congress enacted in 1997, job training has taken on a more regional approach through the creation of workforce development boards. These entities are responsible for identifying job growth and employment opportunities across broader geographic regions, and focusing the training programs they support to help match trainees to these job growth patterns. Several community organizing projects have taken it upon themselves to help identify such job growth opportunities and direct resources to programs that will help low-income families prepare themselves to get them.

Other Issues. There is also a great deal of organizing underway on a range of other issues, including school quality, predatory lending, community reinvestment, worker rights and immigrant rights.

Reaching Out

Housing, transportation and workforce development are key smart growth issues for low-income and minority communities when viewed in the context of metropolitan regions. Smart growth can facilitate the integration of housing, transportation and workforce development policies and planning practices. Transportation projects that contribute to sprawl and exacerbate the distances between job growth and the location of affordable housing matter to community organizing groups. Access to affordable housing is an underpinning factor in ensuring the stability a family needs in order to achieve economic opportunity. Also critical is the location of job growth, and the ability of low-income families to develop their skills in order to qualify for such jobs.

In Northwest Indiana, The Interfaith Federation is a congregation-based organizing project in the cities of Gary, Hammond, East Chicago and their surrounding suburbs. For the last five years the Interfaith Federation has struggled to address inequities in its metropolitan region through a campaign to bring regional transit to Lake County. This proposal grew out of a realization that the public transportation system failed to connect the job-poor central cities with high job growth areas, particularly in the southern half of the county. In addition, bus routes stopped at city borders, indicating the lack of coordination among local transit providers in Lake County. By bringing a moral element into the regional smart growth debate, the Federation succeeded in getting their Metropolitan Planning Organization to shift the route of a light rail line so that it would travel through and stop in a central city community rather than simply pass from one suburb to another. Building on this and other success, in the fall of 2001, the Interfaith Federation prevailed in its campaign to win a regional transit authority for Lake County, Indiana.

Community Organizers

NNC's Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth are an excellent starting point for helping community organizing projects envision how they might impact metropolitan growth trends.

Finding a Local Representative

The following resources can help connect you to organizing groups in your communities:

- **Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN),** 877-55ACORN, www.acorn.org. ACORN offices organize low- and moderate-income communities around issues like predatory lending, living wage campaigns and affordable housing. See web page or contact their national office at 877-55ACORN for a local office near you.
- **The Direct Action Research and Training Network (DART),** 305-576-8020, www.thedartcenter.org. Dart is a national network of grassroots, metropolitan, congregation-based, community organizations. Web page includes list of local affiliates.
- **The Gamaliel Foundation**, 312 357-2639, www.gamaliel.org. Faith-based organizing institute. Web page includes list of affiliates.

Other Resources

- **The Center for Community Change**, 202-342-0567, www.communitychange.org,. Links to national organizing campaigns and legislative information. Houses the Transportation Equity Network.
- **The National Housing Trust Fund**, 202-662-1530, www.nhtf.org. The National Housing Trust Fund Campaign is working to establish a National Housing Trust Fund that would build and preserve 1.5 million units of rental housing for the lowest income families over the next 10 years.
- **Center for Third World Organizing**, 510-533-7583, www.ctwo.org. The center links communities of color with organizing skills, political education, and visions of a just society
- **National Civic League**, 303-571-4343, www.ncl.org. NCL is dedicated to strengthening citizen democracy by transforming democratic institutions

Community Schools Advocates

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ADVOCATES

Who They Are

Community schools bring together public and private organizations to offer a range of services, supports and opportunities that strengthen and support schools, communities, families and students before, during and after school. Though there are many models of community schools, most tend to share a core set of principles:

- Foster strong partnerships with community stakeholders
- Share accountability for results across partners
- Set high expectations for all
- Build on the community's strengths
- Embrace and respect diversity among people and organizations
- Avoid cookie-cutter solutions

The goal of a community school is to effectively use the assets of a community to ensure that children enter school ready to learn everyday and succeed. Community schools provide the opportunity to raise awareness on how investing in the education and development of young people benefits the community, schools, families and youth. They also provide an opportunity for parents as well as community residents without school-age children to have a role in ensuring the success of schools and the students they serve. Community schools influence the policy-makers and practitioners on what it takes to get better results among young people.

The governance of a community school often depends on the assets and conditions of a community. Effective leadership is central to the success of a community school strategy. In some communities the principal leads the enterprise; in others a local intermediary or a local agency manages the day-to-day administration. In many places the structure is informal, allowing more room for flexibility in this ever-evolving process.

The constituents of a community school include any and all individuals, institutions or organizations that are interested in improving outcomes for school-aged children and youth. This includes parents, school personnel, community-based organizations, local businesses, government and private funders. Community schools exist in urban, rural and suburban communities throughout the United States.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Community schools are an important part of the fabric of healthy neighborhoods and as such are part of smart growth. Ensuring the successful growth and development of America's youth is everybody's business. Community schools offer an opportunity to realize that goal one community at a time.

Smart growth advocates have become involved in debates about school sprawl and preservation of historic community schools. For community schools advocates the focus is not only preserving

Community Schools Advocates

certain types of buildings but also promoting an environment that supports the community school mission. Community schools advocates are youth advocates — they view quality schools as not an end in themselves, but a means to providing better opportunities for the growth and development of America's youth. Communities that are good for youth are good for everyone. They rely on features of the smart growth movement such as walkability and access to public transportation; access to parks and open space; quality, affordable housing in close proximity to schools and job opportunities; access to health care, social services and other amenities.

Community schools advocates value trust among partners. In any collaborative enterprise, to build trusting relationships among partners requires time, resources and strong and consistent leadership. Each participating organization must feel like an equal partner, that their contribution is valued, and that the vision and mission of the community school aligns with/complements their own organization's vision and mission. For community school advocates and smart growth partners to work together successfully, it is important that the education and other needs of youth are an important part of the smart growth agenda. This means focusing not only on land use and transportation reform, but thinking about how specific changes (such as to zoning codes or transportation choices) will support better opportunities for youth and the community as a whole.

Reaching Out

These are some ways that smart growth advocates and community school advocates can work together:

- **Work with advocates to make smart growth youth- and school-friendly**. Think about how local zoning policies and state school building regulations help or hinder the construction and preservation of smaller scale, community school buildings.
- **Talk with school advocates about the possibilities for transit-oriented development and a mix of land uses** that provide the opportunities that support a learning community.

One potential hot button that may cause tension among advocates relates to school vouchers. Some community school advocates believe that school vouchers allow the government to abdicate its responsibility to ensure the right to a quality education. Smart growth advocates can focus on the potential for better growth to contribute to a better environment for schools and youth

Finding a Local Representative

If there is a community school in your neighborhood or region, local school districts may connect you to its leadership. If there are not any present in your community, local smart growth advocates may want to invite a local principal, superintendent, parents, or community-based organization to one of their meetings to talk about the possibilities of a partnership.

Other Resources

Coalition for Community Schools, www.communityschools.org. Call Sheri Johnson at 202-822-8405, ext. 154 for more information.

Environmental Justice Advocates

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVOCATES

Who They Are

Environmental justice (EJ) organizations work in low- and moderate-income urban and rural neighborhoods and communities of color that have been hardest hit by environmental hazards and the health problems associated with them. Low-income and minority neighborhoods have been disproportionately burdened with toxic land uses such as trash facilities, waste dumping, and industrial plants, and have high occurrences of brownfields (contaminated sites), and polluted air and water. As a result, these communities often have high rates of asthma and other environment-related illness.

EJ groups tend to be very grassroots and locally focused rather than centralized. There is no single trade association of EJ organizations; however groups like the South East Regional Economic Justice Network (REJN), Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), and the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) serve as networks for local organizations and represent the EJ movement in regional and national discussions. The methods of organization will vary from place to place and issue to issue. Some organizations act as intermediaries, providing education, technical support, organizing and other assistance to communities. An organizing campaign may be housed within an existing organization such as a local church or community development organization or within a coalition of local groups. Or, informal groups of citizens may come together around a particular issue. In fact, environmental justice concerns like polluted rivers or trash facilities have often been the motivating issues around which new local organizations have coalesced.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

EJ organizations work on issues like remediation of polluted sites, lead paint and asbestos removal and improving air and water quality. They also seek to improve access to parks and open space for residents, to provide greener surroundings, and to improve transportation options that both increase economic and social opportunities for residents and have less harmful impacts on the environment.

The key issue for EJ groups is that physical and emotional health is related to the environment in which we live. Low-income communities and people of color have historically borne unhealthy land uses more than affluent places. Local, state and federal incentives for development on the fringes of regions have encouraged the abandonment of cities and drained the tax base and funding out of these communities, making it hard to rehabilitate abandoned and contaminated buildings and lots or to provide adequate park space, access to waterfronts, and other public amenities.

While all EJ groups share basic concerns about health, justice, civil rights and community involvement in planning, their immediate concerns, long term goals, and coalition needs will vary by the community. For instance, a predominantly Spanish-speaking community in the Colonias of the southwest will have different education needs than an English speaking community in the Northeastern US or among a neighborhood in Minneapolis.

Environmental Justice Advocates

A range of national and state organizations including environmentalists, transportation advocates and advocates for low-income communities touch on environmental justice issues in their daily work. At the local, regional, or state level, it is more likely that EJ organizations would be working in a coalition if they are involved in regional growth or smart growth policy discussions.

Reaching Out

The barriers to bringing EJ groups into coalitions about growth and planning are somewhat similar to those experienced with rural communities. In the past, smart growth has focused on issues with a more immediate appeal to suburban and upper-income urban communities — commute times, design issues, saving open space and farmland — rather than the more gritty issues of lead paint remediation and asthma rates.

Advocates for better growth that only focus on the "do we sprawl or do we grow in" debate are not likely to make inroads with EJ groups. Instead, it is better to focus on social equity and how all communities have a right to clean environments and livable spaces championed by the Smart Growth Network's principles — a range of (environmentally healthy) housing choices, walkable neighborhoods (without a disproportionate danger of pedestrian dangers); a mix of land uses (rather than a high proportion of industrial or vacant land); compact building design (that allows for preservation of park space and open areas). NNC's Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth provide a clear connection for EJ groups.

EJ groups have traditionally worked with churches and faith-based organizations, some university research institutes, and locally-based organizations like community health centers and community development groups. The smart growth movement can benefit from reaching out to EJ groups and their partners by gaining a broader coalition supporting the goals of better regional growth, and in many cases, well-trained, passionate organizers. Ultimately, EJ groups bring local, grassroots involvement to smart growth campaigns.

A potential area of tension between EJ groups and smart growth advocates includes affordable housing and gentrification, since areas that successfully organize around EJ issues may become the "desirable" areas for future development. Local control versus being co-opted by a larger coalition is also a concern for EJ groups. EJ and other advocates for low-income communities have real concerns about how new development will affect them — will it mean revitalized neighborhoods with wider opportunities for housing, services and access to transportation, or will it mean rising housing costs and displacement of lower-income families?

Finding a Local Representative

The People of Color Environmental Groups Directory, published by the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University, is a great source of grassroots organizations working on environmental justice issues. If your community is not represented in the directory, try looking for announcements for meetings in neighborhood newsletters and newspapers.

Environmental Justice Advocates

Area churches, community development corporations and community action agencies may be involved with EJ groups and local ACORN offices are a good source of information and organizing. Also check with local transportation advocates, environmental organizations, and community health centers that may be working on air and water quality issues and the social justice implications of environmental quality.

The following organizations may have an EJ-focused member in your area:

- **Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)**, Oakland, CA. 510-834-8920, www.igc.org/envjustice/training/apen.html.
- **Farmworker Network for Economic and Environmental Justice**, Auburndale, Fl , www.farmworkernetwork.org.
- **Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN),** Bemidji, Minnesota. 218-751-4967, www.ienearth.org.
- **National Black Environmental and Economic Justice Coordinating Committee (NBEEJCC),** Washington, DC. 202-265-3263 x 230, www.ejrc.cau.edu/inbeejccpage.htm.
- **Northeast Environmental Justice Network**, New York, NY. 212-961-1000, www.weact.org/nejn
- **South East Regional Economic Justice Network (REJN),** www.rejn.org.
- **The Southern Organizing Committee for Economic & Social Justice (SOC),** Atlanta, GA. 404-755-2855, www.igc.org/socejp.

Other Resources

- **Environmental Justice Resource Center**, 404-880-6911, www.ejrc.cau.edu. Web page includes a comprehensive list of publications and resources, including the People of Color Environmental Groups Directory 2000 (including groups in Canada and Mexico).
- **Sierra Club Environmental Justice Program**, www.sierraclub.org/environmental_justice/.
- **Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE),** 617-442-3343, www.ace-ej.org. Works in partnership with community organizations in Roxbury, MA to educate citizens, develop neighborhood capacity to address EJ issues and create solutions.
- **US Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Justice** web page, www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/index.html.

Environmental Organizations

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Who They Are

Environmental organizations work on a variety of issues relating to the land, to people's health and to the preservation of non-human species and habitat. While the mainstream environmental movement has its strongest base of support in the suburbs, there is increasing interest in environmental issues among city dwellers as well. The movement is very large, with membership of a half-million or more each in national groups like the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. In addition to the hundreds of local chapters, offices, and affiliates of such organizations, citizen environmental groups often form to protect specific resources or communities. Government agencies at local, state, and Federal levels are subject to pressure from such groups, including the EPA, the Fish and Wildlife Service, state departments of natural resources and environmental protection, and local environmental management agencies.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

While emphasis may vary, the primary concern for these organizations is protection of the physical landscape and environmental habitat. Environmentalists are involved with smart growth and suburban sprawl issues for reasons such as the loss of open spaces, fragmentation of habitat and the impacts of sprawl on air and water quality, particularly due to the continued growth of vehicle miles traveled and the spread of impervious surfaces (i.e., pavement) associated with sprawl.

Activity in smart-growth debates by environmentalists increases at the local level. Local groups are most active, often opposing specific projects or plans. Other groups, such as Sierra Club and Public Interest Research Group chapters increasingly advocate for the adoption of smart growth policies by state legislatures and executives. The national environmental groups are gradually increasing their involvement in smart growth issues in states and at the federal level, with organizations like the Sierra Club, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and Defenders of Wildlife leading the way.

Reaching Out

Smart growth addresses many of the concerns of environmentalists because it can reduce pressure on open spaces with high conservation value, and significantly reduces the impacts of development on air and water quality. It can conserve energy and resources by making more efficient use of existing physical infrastructure. Involvement of environmentalists in the smart growth movement is indispensable, given the popularity and political clout of the environmental movement. The vast majority of Americans consider themselves environmentalists, and public opinion research shows that symptoms of sprawl's impact on the environment, like the disappearance of cherished open spaces, are often what first spurs interest in smarter, alternative development patterns.

Environmentalists often work in coalition with public health groups, outdoor recreation clubs, transportation alternatives activists, and historic preservationists. In recent years, exciting collaborations have also been forged with racial justice groups (especially through the environmental justice movement), farmers, unions, as well as affordable housing advocates.

Environmental Organizations

In the past there has been tension between environmentalists and affordable housing advocates. In some places housing advocates have feared that growth measures would diminish the supply of land and drive up the price of housing. Recently, these factions have begun to come together to find common ground. For example, in Florida the Sadowski Act Coalition, which includes the Florida Home Builders Association, the Florida League of Cities, the Florida Catholic Conference and the 1,000 Friends of Florida, joined forces to successfully defend affordable housing and conservation funding during the 2002 legislative session. Nationally, the Sierra Club's Challenge to Sprawl Campaign has joined housing groups in support of a bill that would establish a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Population is another area of potential conflict or tension. There is a segment of the environmental movement that focuses on slowing the global population growth rate through improvement of women's rights and education efforts. Other population activists are concerned with the carrying capacity[1] of the United States or of particular regions. This concern at times leads them to embrace the position that smart growth is little more than "slow death." Those who take this stance advocate for solutions such as growth caps at the regional level and immigration limits at the national level. Such environmentalists seem unaware of the fact that while the United States is largely growing in the form of increasingly low-density suburban sprawl, there is a whole gamut of development patterns with vastly smaller ecological footprints — in terms of impacts on air, water, as well as land — included under the smart growth banner.

The bottom line is that environmental issues have been the engine behind the smart growth movement. Over the past four decades, environmentalists have built a national movement comparable in size and power to the labor and civil rights movements in their zeniths. The movement has impressive political clout, and has proven capable of remarkable fundraising, organizing, and media relations.

Finding a Local Representative

- **Sierra Club,** 415-977-5500, www.sierraclub.org. For information on environmental groups involved with smart growth in your area, contact your local Sierra Club Chapter. A listing of chapters by state can be found at www.sierraclub.org/my_backyard/ or you can contact the D.C. Representative for the Challenge to Sprawl Campaign, Melody Flowers, at 202-547-1141.
- **Audubon Society**, www.audubon.org. Web page includes links to state offices and local chapters.
- **Growth Management Leadership Alliance**, 202-974-5137 www.gmla.org. Web page includes links to state ad local members including state **1000 Friends** groups, which advocate for better land use.
- **Land Trust Alliance**, 202-638-4725, www.lta.org. Web page includes list of local land trusts by state.

[1] Carrying capacity refers to the number of individuals who can be supported in a given area within natural resource limits, and without degrading the natural social, cultural, and economic environment for present and future generations (www.carryingcapacity.org).

Environmental Organizations

Other Resources

- **Natural Resources Defense Council**, Smart Growth Program. , www.nrdc.org/cities/smartGrowth/, or contact Deron Lovaas, Deputy Director of the Smart Growth Program, at 202-289-6868.
- **Trust for Public Land**, 202-543-7552, www.tpl.org. Web page includes links to regional and state offices.

Faith-Based Organizations

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND COALITIONS

Who They Are

Faith-based organizations cover a huge spectrum including congregations, interdenominational organizations, nonprofit organizations that are affiliated with a specific congregation or denomination, and independent organizations. Because of the breadth of organizations and denominations, faith-based allies around growth-related issues will vary by region and community.

Among potential partners for regional coalition building around growth issues:

- Local congregations — Congregations exist to fulfill the spiritual needs of their members. Beyond this, they have a commitment to serve the needs of families and children, with a particular concern for the poor. Some congregations run food banks and homeless shelters and provide other services to the needy. Every religion and denomination is different - some, like the Catholic Church, are highly structured and centralized.
- Metropolitan-wide coalitions of congregations that cut across denomination lines.
- Community development organizations — Urban and rural faith-based organizations make up fifteen percent of community development corporations in the U.S.[2] Faith-based community development corporations, have missions and provide services along the same lines as other community development organizations – affordable housing, creating programs to serve youth, and job training, among others.
- Affiliates of national faith-based organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and Volunteers of America.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Faith-based organizations are motivated by a concern for the spiritual, social and physical well-being of all people. Churches and faith-based nonprofits provide food, shelter, job training, daycare and a wide range of other services to the poor and those in need. Social justice has been a focus of many congregations and faith-based groups. African-American churches have historically been leaders within the civil rights movement. Engaging the faith community brings moral weight to smart growth coalitions.

Faith-based organizations are increasingly becoming involved in discussions and policy decisions about sprawl and growth. This is a logical extension of their work on social justice issues - sprawl has contributed to racial and economic segregation and regional inequities regarding funding for transportation and infrastructure. Some faith-based groups are also concerned about the moral implications of the environmental impacts of sprawl.

Coalitions of congregations have been leaders at the metropolitan level, working on issues like distribution of and access to affordable housing, and equitable public transportation systems. For

[2] National Congress for Community Economic Development, www.ncced.org.

Faith-Based Organizations

example Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity (BREAD), a coalition of urban and suburban congregations in the Columbus, OH metro area, organized congregation members around a campaign to expand bus service for central city residents, and to bring a transit hub for bus service with facilities for child and health care to an urban neighborhood.

Faith-based organizations are not as prominent in national debates about sprawl and smart growth. Some national offices of denominations have positions on growth issues, such as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop's *Renewing the Face of the Earth*, which is the U.S. Bishops' primary pastoral statement on the environment. It links a concern for the environment with issues of social justice and a concern for the poor.

Interest in smart growth issues is likely to vary tremendously among different types of organizations, constituencies, communities and denominations. Urban churches may be losing their base as residents move to suburban areas. They may also deal more directly with low-income and needy populations, providing services to the homeless and other groups. The negative socioeconomic impacts of sprawl and the need for policy reform at the regional level may be more apparent to these congregations and organizations than to suburban groups. At the same time, some of these churches may be too burdened with the immediate concerns of their communities to feel equipped to participate in regional issues.

Reaching Out

The main draw for faith-based groups working on sprawl and smart growth is social justice. Smart Growth Network principles address the need for access to transportation for workers and a range of housing at a variety of incomes. NNC's Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth further address the social impacts of sprawl and emphasize the need for equitable distribution of beneficial land uses and opportunities.

The smart growth movement can benefit from the involvement of faith-based organizations and congregations in regional growth discussions. Faith-based groups reach out to many individuals every day. They bring a values perspective to discussions of metropolitan growth issues that many other organizations do not, which may appeal to a sense of justice and fairness in a different way than discussions of environmental or land use issues. Churches in particular are in a position to conduct massive education campaigns by reaching out through their congregations. Congregation-based coalitions can bring a wide range of people together who might not otherwise communicate frequently — crossing race, economic, and religious lines to find common issues of concern within their region.

Messages about sprawl and social justice will resonate more with some than others. For example, there are many different churches that serve African-American communities, but some of the most influential are the institutions affiliated with one or more of the major Baptist associations and the Methodists (the oldest independent African-American denomination is the African Methodist

Faith-Based Organizations

Episcopal (AME) church, founded in 1787). Talking about the inequities of sprawl with leaders within these churches (who may themselves be losing members to sprawl) may hit a chord. At the same time, the Pentecostal Church is another important constituent of African American churches. Theirs tend to be smaller, "store front" churches that are more focused on evangelism, and may be less likely to be part of community movements that do not have a direct spiritual focus.

One potential area of tension for faith-based community development organizations and service providers may be affordable housing. These groups may express concerns similar to those of other affordable housing providers about the impact of growth management on the availability of affordable housing. Smart growth advocates may need to be prepared to educate these potential allies about their commitment to affordable housing.

Traditionally, congregations and faith-based groups have worked with their members, other congregations, labor unions, community development organization and other social-justice advocates. Many of these organizations bring constituencies to the table that have not been involved in growth discussions before, such as low-income urban residents and people of color and can potentially bring a broad based coalition of urban and suburban groups together to support better growth policies.

Finding a Local Representative

Talk with local pastors, priests and other congregation leaders to determine their level of involvement and interest in smart growth. Offer to hold an educational meeting to introduce people to the issues and to make the connection between regional growth policies and issues of immediate concern in their neighborhood, such as abandoned housing or limited public transportation.

Many national faith-based organizations have members at the local level. Some to try:

- **Habitat for Humanity International**, www.habitat.org. Web page includes a list of local affiliates.
- **Volunteers of America**, 800-899-0089, www.voa.org. Web page includes a list of local affiliates.
- **Catholic Charities**, 703-549-1390, www.catholiccharitiesusa.org. Web page includes a list of local affiliates.
- **National Congress for Community Economic Development**, Faith-Based Community Economic Development Initiative, 202-354-3928, www.ncced.org.

Other Resources

- **The Direct Action Research and Training Network (DART),** 305-576-8020, www.thedartcenter.org. Dart is a national network of grassroots, metropolitan, congregation-based, community organizations.. Web page includes list of local affiliates.

Faith-Based Organizations

- **The Gamaliel Foundation**, 312 357-2639, www.gamaliel.org. Faith-based organizing institute. Web page includes list of affiliates.
- Many **Catholic dioceses** have legislative networks or are represented by State Catholic Conferences that are effective ways to engage the State legislature. Building on existing diocesan efforts to aid neighborhoods, improve housing, eliminate poverty, and promote social justice, these environmental programs can enable the Catholic Church to become a strong local ally in the smart growth effort. If the diocesan social action director is unknown to you, contact the USCCB Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of Diocesan Outreach, 202.541.3195.

Farmland Preservation Advocates

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVOCATES

Who They Are

Advocates of farmland protection are a diverse group of farmers and ranchers, the organizations that support them, land trusts, planners, local government officials and state agencies. Local elected officials and their staffs realize that having privately held farmland and ranchland in their communities provides a net fiscal benefit since this land generates taxes and does not require the expensive public infrastructure that would be needed if the land was developed.

Traditional USDA field programs and personnel, such as Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Resource Conservation and Development Districts, have become interested in the issue. They are increasingly being asked by their communities to provide assistance when rural-urban land use conflicts occur. Environmentalists also have taken to the issue, as they realize that while the working landscape may not be in its most natural state, the environmental impact of converting farm, ranch and forest land to development would have many more negative impacts to the environment than well-managed agricultural land.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Individuals and communities involved with farmland conservation are logical partners for people working on smart growth issues. Many smart growth constituents are concerned about the conversion of farm, forest and ranch land to sprawling developments. For some it's for fiscal and economic reasons — agriculture contributes to local economies through sales, job creation, support services and businesses, and lucrative secondary industries such as food processing. In addition, distinctive agricultural landscapes often are magnets for tourism, and help define the character of local communities.

Sprawling development, on the other hand, imposes on communities direct and indirect costs associated with the loss of rural lands and open spaces. More than 80 Cost of Community Services studies conducted by The American Farmland Trust have shown that on average, privately owned working lands more than pay for the public services they require, while residential development fails to cover its costs. Well-managed farmland also benefits the environment, including food and cover for wildlife, flood control, wetlands and watershed protection, and well-maintained air quality. Finally, for many, farming, ranching and the open landscape that support them are cherished parts of their community's heritage and quality of life.

There is a logical partnership between people who are interested in urban revitalization and smart growth issues, and those concerned with resource conservation and farmland protection. Often, they are addressing two sides of the same issue. Inefficient development and the government policies behind it drive agricultural land conversion. Factors that push urban residents to seek more rural areas — such as crime, poor quality schools and high housing costs — also affect rural

Farmland Preservation Advocates

communities near the urban fringe who get caught between the development pressure caused by "urban flight" and their desire to protect their agricultural resources. This recognition has resulted in some innovative partnerships across the country (see sidebar).

Reaching Out

It is important to recognize the distinction between working landscapes and open space. Farmland protection advocates are not only interested in saving farm, forest and ranch land from development. They also want to make sure that the protected land is actively farmed and that it remains in private ownership. Reaching out to and working with these advocates means understanding the need to support the agricultural economy as part of good growth practices. Farmland advocates encourage planning and zoning to support commercial agriculture, and economic development policies that favor a strong local farm economy. While farmland protection and open space protection is viewed by some as interchangeable, for those interested in the long-term protection of farm, forest and ranch land, it is not truly agricultural land unless it is actively farmed.

In 1998, the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, Fresno County Farm Bureau, Building Association of San Joaquin Valley, American Farmland Trust (AFT) and Fresno Business Council joined together in Fresno County, California to form the Growth Alternatives Alliance. This group developed a common vision for the future that provided a wide range of affordable housing products, while at the same time protected vital natural resources and improved the quality of life for residents of Fresno County and its cities. AFT and the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) have joined forces to address the problems — urban, rural and suburban — associated with sprawl. Their mutual goal is to promote growth and development that uses land and existing infrastructure more efficiently; that relies more on public transportation and less on the auto; that conserves farmland and strengthens agriculture; and that results in communities that are safe, diverse, pleasant places to live and to work. Towards that end, AFT and USCM sponsored a series of forums in 2000-2001 to bring together urban and rural leaders — many for the first time — to discuss land use issues facing their communities.

Finding a Local Representative

American Farmland Trust, 202-331-7300, www.farmland.org. Contact American Farmland Trust for information about agricultural land protection groups and efforts in your area. For technical assistance on protecting agricultural land, contact AFT's Farmland Information Center at 800-370-4879.

Other Resources

Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation, www.smartgrowth.org/pdf/gettosg.pdf.

Historic Preservation Organizations

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

Who They Are

Historic preservation advocates are concerned with saving America's diverse historic places — from important neighborhood buildings to vintage barns to cultural and ethnic resources. Historic preservationists have been among the leaders of the anti-sprawl and smart growth movements. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the leading historic preservation organization in the country. It hosts the Main Street program, which has been one of the most successful revitalization programs in America, having helped 1,600 communities bring new life to their historic downtown districts. The Trust's Community Partners Program works closely with community developers to use preservation as a tool for improving low-income neighborhoods.

In addition to the National Trust for Historic Preservation there are 39 state-level preservation organizations and many similar local groups. At the local government level, the players may include historic preservation commissions, preservation planners (within a city department of planning or a private organization), downtown development authorities, housing agencies, tree commissions, beautification organizations and economic development agencies. Nonprofit organization may include local chapters of national organizations, preservation organizations, historical societies, land trusts, neighborhood associations, merchant associations and garden clubs.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

At the heart of all of these organization's work is the belief that historic places are an essential and irreplaceable part of the American landscape. All preservation organizations are concerned with increasing awareness of the importance of historic structures and districts to the vitality of communities. National and state organizations may be more involved in promoting public policies that encourage revitalization and rehabilitation of historic buildings, while their local counterparts may be more involved in on-the-ground efforts to protect specific sites. Local Main Street offices (affiliates of the National Trust's program) work specifically on downtown revitalization, but other groups may work on a variety of preservation issues from historic neighborhoods to parks and rural landscapes. The issue of school sprawl — the building of mega-schools on undeveloped land in outlying areas — and the loss of historic neighborhood schools has been a main concern of preservation advocates[1].

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has been an important player in smart growth work at the national level. Involvement at the state and local level will vary depending on local growth measures, but generally, preservationists believe that controlling sprawl is an important part of revitalizing and protecting historic areas. Both urban and rural communities have faced the danger of loss or important historic resources via neglect or inappropriate development — neglect when investment has passed urban neighborhoods and small towns in favor of sprawl, and inappropriate development when rural areas have been consumed by outward growth from metropolitan areas and urban communities have faced sudden development in formerly neglected areas.

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[1]See *Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl: Why Johnny Can't Walk to School,* which analyzes the impact of public policies on efforts to preserve and modernize historic neighborhood schools and to avoid "mega-school sprawl" in remote locations. (www.nationaltrust.org/issues/historic_schools.html)

Historic Preservation Organizations

Reaching Out

Preservation advocates can relate to smart growth principles that speak to the need to protect and foster distinctive, attractive places, preserve open space and farmland, and direct growth back to existing areas. The case for stopping sprawl is fairly clear for these advocates.

- Sprawl drains the life out of older downtowns and residential neighborhoods where historic buildings are concentrated, leaving them vulnerable to underuse, neglect and demolition.
- Sprawl destroys the unique identity and character of towns and the countryside. Cohesive main streets, historic landmarks, tree-lined country roads — these and other features that enhance the American landscape are devastated by sprawl.
- Sprawl eliminates all transportation choices except driving, thus adding to pressures to create or widen roads that often destroy historic resources or degrade their settings.

Local smart growth advocates will benefit from the support of preservation organizations that have experience working on community revitalization. The Main Street Center has operated in almost 1,600 communities since 1980, generating over $15.2 billion in downtown reinvestment. The Community Partners Program's National Trust Loan Funds uses combined assets of approximately $10 million to assist the implementation of historic preservation projects. Preservationists have partnered with other organizations on many issues — from preserving historic neighborhood schools to resisting "big-box" retail in communities. An area of potential tension is the inappropriate redevelopment of areas of historic significance — preservationists will be supportive of reinvestment, but their priority is preserving historic resources.

The preservation movement has been active for several decades and has a high degree of public support. At the national and state level, these groups are very organized and have political clout and access to financial resources. Recognition at the local level may vary, but the presence of historic preservationists within local planning departments or other agencies can add to their power.

Finding a Representative

Historic Preservation Commissions

Contact your local city government office of planning and zoning to find out if your town has a Historic Preservation Commission and/or Design Review Board in place.

Main Street Programs

For a state-by-state listing of local Main Street programs, go to www.mainst.org/FrontPage/NationalCommunities/NatlCommunitiesList.htm.

Certified Local Governments

Local governments can strengthen their local historic preservation efforts by achieving Certified Local Government (CLG) status from the National Park Service (NPS). Technical assistance and small matching grants are available to CLGs through the NPS and State governments. To search participating CLGs in each state, go to grants.cr.nps.gov/CLGs/CLG_Search.cfm.

Historic Preservation Organizations

Other Resources

National Organizations

National Trust for Historic Preservation, 202-588-6000, www.nthpbooks.org. Web site includes links to publications on Communities and Sprawl, and information about the National Main Street Center, www.mainst.org, and state Main Street programs, www.mainst.org/ResourcesAndContacts/state.asp. The National Trust also has a list of its' preservation partners at the state and local levels: www.nthp.org/state_and_local/index.asp.

Preservation Action, 202-659-0915, www.preservationaction.org. Preservation Action advocates for federal legislation to further the impact of historic preservation at the local, state and national level.

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, 706-542-4731, www.arches.uga.edu/~napc/. The alliance helps build local preservation programs through education, training, and advocacy.

State Organizations

National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, 202-624-5465, www.sso.org/ncshpo. Web site includes a state-by-state listing of State Historic Preservation Offices.

Labor Unions

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: LABOR UNIONS

Who They Are

With 16 million members, organized labor is among America's largest force for social and economic justice. Roughly half of all union members live in urban areas. There are 66 national unions, whose members work in virtually all sectors of the economy. Each of these unions has affiliated locals in the states that bargain and enforce contracts between workers and management. These same union locals also engage in local, state and national political issues.

The AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations) is the umbrella organization that helps coordinate the work of these unions nationally, and through 50 statewide organizations and nearly 600 Central Labor Councils. The state labor federation coordinates statewide activities and the Central Labor Councils perform the same functions more locally, in cities and counties. Their activities include work on national, state and local politics, organizing new members and providing a range of services such as education and legal services and various kinds of community support. Often the AFL-CIO and its affiliates work with non-labor allies on a range of issues from housing to economic development to environmental protection and civil and human rights.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Labor's support for smart growth manifested in the AFL-CIO passing a resolution that condemned sprawl and promoted smart growth. The resolution was passed at the AFL-CIO National Convention in December 2001. The text of the resolution describes the Federation's interest[1]:

- strains on working families, such as police, firefighters, teachers and others, because of long commutes and lack of affordable housing;
- loss of unionized, fair-wage jobs in urban and older suburban areas as manufacturers have relocated to outlying areas and big-box retailers have displaced smaller neighborhood retailers;
- abandonment of cities and subsequent loss of tax base and decreased quality of public services and deteriorated schools;
- loss of density and power of janitorial and building maintenance unions, restaurant and hotel employees and other unions as sprawling development has dispersed various industries;
- strains on families because of environmental issues as a result of pollution from long commutes and heavy use of highways (such as high childhood asthma rates);
- lack of affordable housing near jobs, resulting in stress on two-wage families who are less able to spend time addressing family issues.

The way sprawl affects politics is also harmful to union members. For example, maps of the voting records of the Chicago region's state representatives, state senators and members of the U.S. Congress show that legislators representing Chicago, its mature inner-ring suburbs and blue-collar

[1] See AFL-CIO, Convention 2001 Resolution 16: Urban Sprawl and Smart Growth, www.aflcio.org/convention01/res_16.pdf.

Labor Unions

south and southwest suburbs voted far more favorably for working families than those in outer-ring suburbs and the north and northwest. The same pattern would be apparent, no doubt, in almost every urban region of the U.S.

Reaching Out

By working with labor leaders, smart growth advocates stand to gain political support in urban and inner-ring suburban areas. They also develop credibility with other social justice organizations and leaders. The basic principles of smart growth — denser development, more housing and transportation choices, preservation of communities and environment — are good for unions. Promoting reinvestment in older urban and inner-ring communities through affordable, infill housing and better transportation choices is key to creating livable communities and building union density in those areas. Economic development and tax policy are also issues that labor cares about. Labor unions, along with a growing number of grassroots organizations, have begun insisting that companies that receive economic development subsidies be held accountable for providing high quality, living-wage jobs.

How to Find Representatives in Your Area

Start by contacting a local labor activist who you know. They can direct you to other resources. However, if you're starting fresh, just look in the phone directory for the telephone number of your local central labor council, or call the national **AFL-CIO** for local information at 202-637-5000, or see www.afl-cio.org.

Other Resources

Good Jobs First, 202-737-4315, www.goodjobsfirst.org/gjf.htm. See report "Talking to Union Leaders About Smart Growth."

Local Government Agencies

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Who They Are

City and county governments in urban, suburban and rural areas all have a role to play in promoting smart growth that meets the needs of all communities. These bodies, and the elected and appointed officials who are part of them are the key decision-makers for most communities. They are charged with implementing policies and programs to enhance the community, and have the overall responsibility for supervising governmental departments and service providers. The individual structures of local and county governments vary from region to region and state to state, with some localities having a strong executive position (mayor or county executive), and others having a strong council system.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

The key issues for local governments and elected officials are related to overall community health. They are responsible for all areas that concern citizens, from environment to education, from jobs and economic development to transportation.

Involvement in smart growth varies tremendously by the region, its geography, population, demographics and other factors. However, most elected officials are grappling with some (and usually multiple) aspects of smart growth challenges. The most common challenges are addressing sprawl, alleviating transportation difficulties, planning for new development, assuring adequate open space, protecting natural resources, preserving community character and addressing the need for affordable housing.

Reaching Out

Without the involvement of those who actually make growth and development decisions, advocates will not succeed in achieving smarter growth. Therefore, it is essential to engage your local elected officials. Smart growth's combined emphasis on environmental, fiscal and social issues can be an important means of addressing the array of challenges that local governments face. The label of smart growth crystallizes these different issues and prescribes certain activities - such as more dense development, walkable neighborhoods with access to public transportation, and a range of housing types and income levels — to help address them.

The main areas of potential tension revolve around different definitions of smart growth. Some groups oppose smart growth because they misunderstand its goals and fear that it will mean a ban on new development. Other groups may seek to apply the smart growth label to measures that are meant to prevent any type of development coming into their community. To be effective, advocates should make the objectives of smart growth clear: promoting more thoughtful development, not stopping growth. Local officials want to see smart growth as achieving a rational, reasonable, respectful balance of the economic, environmental and social realities of the communities that they

Local Government Agencies

lead. It should be seen as respectful of the local environment and history, and not imposing a single set of rules or measures.

Since local officials — from neighborhood level city council members to county executives — represent everyone, it is not easy to point to traditional allies and partners. The biggest things local officials bring to the table are clout, and their ability to implement or stop smart growth initiatives in their tracks. They are in most ways the key constituency that must be convinced of the merits of smart growth for their own communities.

Finding a Local Representative

Because local officials are public servants, they are generally accessible to the public. They, or their representatives, can be reached through their offices and public forums. Try starting with a local neighborhood representative or council member and go from there.

Other Resources

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and the **Joint Center for Sustainable Communities** (with the **US Conference of Mayors**) possess a wealth of information on what local governments and officials have done on issues pertaining to smart growth. For more information see www.naco.org.

US Conference of Mayors, www.mayors.org, links to the Joint Center and the Mayor's Institute on City Design.

Neighborhood Associations

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Who They Are

Neighborhood associations are voluntary groups of neighborhood residents and local business and organization representatives that come together to improve their geographically defined neighborhood. Associations represent a broad range of citizens and geographic areas, from small to large neighborhoods in urban, suburban and rural areas at all ranges of incomes.

Most neighborhood associations work on quality-of-life issues in their neighborhoods, like crime prevention, improving city services and preserving community character. They may sponsor events like neighborhood block parties or festivals, park clean-up days or flea markets. Association meetings typically include discussions of proposed developments in a neighborhood and neighborhood planning processes.

An association typically has an elected board of directors with officers and a set of bylaws. Membership is open to all residents and neighborhood stakeholders. Neighborhood associations can be an important means of building a sense of community and provide a link to local businesses and government officials. As such they are integral partners in promoting smart growth at the neighborhood level.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Tangible quality of life issues with an immediate impact on the neighborhood are key for neighborhood associations such as zoning changes, a proposed development, the physical appearance or safety of a particular building or lot, pedestrian safety, and local parks.

Some neighborhoods are more involved in growth and development issues, and in particular smart growth, than others, depending on what's happing in the city or town and surrounding area. Involvement may be limited to contact with neighborhood planners through a city or town planning office. Others may be involved in regional coalitions working on environmental, transportation or housing campaigns.

Different neighborhoods have different needs and concerns regarding growth issues. For middle- and upper-income communities in suburban areas, there may be concerns about how increased density or changes to transportation systems will affect their way of life. For lower-income suburban and urban communities, issues are more likely to revolve around how to preserve affordable housing opportunities and small businesses as new development is absorbed. Rural communities have a variety of concerns as well — some may be struggling to attract new investment, others may be concerned about threats to the environment or historic resources. The key is to understand the context and the likely concerns and goals of a neighborhood before reaching out to its association.

Neighborhood Associations

Reaching Out

Neighborhood organizations and activists are sometimes perceived as NIMBYs (Not In My Backyard) by developers or smart growth advocates. This can sometimes be the result of consulting neighborhood representatives at the back end of a process, rather than at the beginning. Depending on the income level of and development pressures on a neighborhood, residents will be more or less open to affordable housing, dense development or transit-oriented development. Once you have assessed and understood a community's concerns, you can begin to craft a message that appeals to its particular issues. Neighborhood associations can be valuable partners in promoting more equitable, sustainable regional growth, because their own neighborhoods stand to benefit from these policies. Associations in different communities will benefit in different ways:

- For more affluent suburbs and job center communities, better regional growth policies can offer transportation alternatives to congested and overused roads, safer routes to schools for kids, and fewer and shorter car trips when development is coordinated.
- Lower-income urban and older suburban neighborhoods can benefit from better access to public transportation that links them to job opportunities in outlying areas. Appropriate development can bring new parks, improved schools, better shopping opportunities and a range of housing options.
- In rural areas, smarter growth can slow the loss of open space and farm land. It can also provide a range of housing opportunities without making a small town look like a big and dense downtown.

The key is emphasizing the elements of smart growth that meet each community's interests such as pedestrian-friendly development, green space, affordable housing and traffic calming techniques. In older neighborhoods, smart growth-oriented zoning that includes provisions for affordable housing is particularly appropriate because it emulates the organic form of these neighborhoods — walkable places with housing, commercial space, parks and schools close to one another.

A core group of residents and businesses often participates regularly in neighborhood associations. This is because neighborhood associations are voluntary organizations, and keeping people engaged and having an impact requires regular participation in meetings and other activities.

Participating in larger regional coalitions can lighten the load for neighborhood associations and make it easier for them to participate in regional policies that affect their neighborhood. In turn, regional smart growth advocates will benefit from having the support of town, urban and suburban advocates, and residents who will be affected by changes to growth policies. While neighborhood associations generally do not have large financial resources, they are an important means of political representation. They often work with other key community organization leaders and advocates like community/youth centers, school organizations, and community development corporations.

Neighborhood Associations

Find out who the key leaders are within your local neighborhood association by attending their meetings and reading their newsletters. Go to their meetings to get a sense of local concerns and to find areas of agreement. Ask to be put on their agenda to discuss the issues you have in common.

Finding a Local Representative

Many cities have a neighborhood planning office or neighborhood liaison that works with neighborhood associations in their jurisdiction. They may have a link to local neighborhood associations on their web page. You can also find out about associations through meetings, events and small neighborhood newspapers.

Other Resources

Neighborhoods USA, 937-333-3644, www.nusa.org. National organization with quarterly newsletter and annual conference. Web page includes links to other organizations.

Public Health & Active Living Advocates

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: PUBLIC HEALTH AND ACTIVE-LIVING ADVOCATES

Who They Are

Public health organizations share several goals with community and neighborhood advocacy groups, the most important of which is to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of citizens. In the past, this goal has been addressed independently rather than through collaboration, overlooking mutually beneficial strategies. Today, the rising burdens of physical inactivity, obesity and diabetes may spark an interest in closer collaboration among non-traditional partners to alleviate these and other public health challenges.

Due to the significant personal and social consequences of inactivity, public health experts have long promoted physical activity as a way to help reduce diseases resulting from sedentary lifestyles. Various estimates suggest that physical inactivity is a primary factor in more than 300,000 deaths annually — and 14 percent of *all* deaths in the United States each year. Becoming moderately active could generate meaningful health benefits. In 2000, 28 percent of U.S. adults were sedentary, and 74 percent did not achieve the U.S. Surgeon General's recommendation for physical activity (30 minutes of moderately intense activity performed at least five days per week). This may explain why one in four adults is obese and more than 60 percent are overweight. Young people face an increasing health threat, with rates of seriously overweight children more than doubling since the 1970s.

These statistics are critical to *Active Living*, a new movement growing within public health. Its goal is to improve health through community design, transportation alternatives, and policies that remove barriers to and create access for individuals to achieve more active lifestyles. This movement is trying to improve infrastructure and create more places and settings where people can engage in physical activity as part of their daily routine. Infrastructure improvements include networks of sidewalks and bikeways, which can allow more people to get to work, school and shopping by foot or bicycle. Supportive community settings include parks, trails and greenways that are linked to local destinations of interest. These settings can help more people accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity at least five days per week.

A diverse cadre of disciplines — professionals and citizens involving city planning, transportation, architecture, law enforcement, education, recreation, community development and faith-based organizations — are embracing the Active Living movement at national, state and local levels. *Active Living by Design*, a National Program Office of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, was recently established to encourage and fund community partnerships that bridge these disciplines.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Positive change within neighborhoods often depends on effective community partnerships. "Healthy

Public Health & Active Living Advocates

Community" partnerships, which are active throughout the united States., can play a key role in Active Living efforts. Healthy Community partnerships attempt to improve health through citizen input and by pooling local resources to address community concerns. These types of groups tend to take a broad view of community health, recognizing the influence on health of lifestyles, education, economics, housing and transportation. Some communities also have more specialized partnerships, such as fitness councils and bicycle advocacy groups, which often include fitness experts, educators, recreation officials and cycling enthusiasts. Local health departments may promote Active Living by coordinating community campaigns and events, such as Walk-to-School Day (www.walktoschool.org) and TV Turn Off Week (www.tvturnoff.org).

Although Active Living advocates are concerned with the entire community, they may focus on a specific population experiencing significant health disparities. For example, people of low-income tend to have higher levels of physical inactivity and suffer disproportionately from chronic diseases. An Active Living strategy for a low-income population might be to improve pedestrian access from residential areas to health care facilities, shopping areas and worksites.

Active Living advocates differ in their backgrounds and specific interests, depending on their particular setting. Rural advocates may be interested in providing parks and trails as well as more accessible transportation to existing facilities. On the other hand, urban advocates might be more concerned with addressing public safety, enhancing existing neighborhood parks, and improving the availability of public transit services.

Here are several examples of strategies employed by Active Living advocates.

- Developing policies that support physical activity among children, including Safe Routes to School programs and increased access to recreational facilities for all citizens before and after school hours.
- Expanding commuter choice options that highlight walking and bicycling as well as accessible public transit.
- Promoting increased access to diverse, safe and affordable facilities for engaging in physical activity, such as neighborhood parks, trails and greenways.
- Developing marketing and communications strategies that raise awareness of opportunities for physical activity and the need to engage in them.
- Promoting mixed-use development and central placement of public facilities to reduce the number and lengths of trips, and reinforce the vitality of downtown main streets.

Reaching Out

Active Living advocates are also closely aligned with organizations that promote Smart Growth, New Urbanism and Neo-traditional Development. These movements strive for well-designed communities that provide safe and abundant opportunities for routine physical activity. Areas of overlap and alignment between Smart Growth and Active Living strategies may include:

Public Health & Active Living Advocates

- **Multiple Modes of Transportation** — A key smart growth feature is the availability of alternative modes of transportation. Accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities, such as sidewalks, trails and bikeways provide opportunities for physical activity for leisure or transportation.
- **Mixed Land Use** — Communities can support walking and bicycling if they are developed with meaningful destinations in close proximity to each other, such as shopping, school and employment.
- **Quality of Life** — Sound growth policies are good for overall quality-of-life and have the potential to impact the health economics of our communities. Direct and indirect costs associated with physical inactivity may total more than $76 billion annually in the united States.
- **Community Participation** — Smart growth and Active Living advocates both support citizen participation in community decision-making processes and community ownership of efforts to improve public programs, facilities and infrastructure.

Active Living advocates have much to offer communities and neighborhoods seeking to use public health as a lever in the smart growth movement. For example, they can provide health data that confirm the value of communities that are designed to support physical activity. In addition, they can convene diverse partnerships of interested and committed citizens and professionals to advise public officials on the importance of opportunities for physical activity. Such partnerships can help develop and implement Active Living strategies. They can also evaluate policies, programs and interventions that create opportunities for physical activity.

Finding a Local Representative

State health departments may provide modest funding opportunities and technical assistance to local agencies that are interested in supporting Active Living. Such departments in Maine, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia provide resources to local communities through their Cardiovascular Health (CVH) Programs. a total of 36 states are funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's CVH Program and support Active Living strategies (www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/cvd/stateprogram.htm). Other state physical activity programs can be found at The Center for Disease Control's website (apps.nccd.cdc.gov/DNPAProg/).

Finding Data

The Community Health Status Indicators Project (www.communityhealth.hrsa.gov/) is a collaborative project of National Association of County and City Health Officials, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the Public Health Foundation, the Health Resources and Services Administration, and the United States Department of Health and Human Services. It provides health assessment information for all U.S. counties and the District of Columbia. Additional data can be located on CDC's website Physical Activity Health Statistics (apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpa/stats.htm).

Public Health & Active Living Advocates

Other Resources

For more information on public health, Active Living, and a variety of tools and publications, go to the **Active Living by Design**, www.activelivingbydesign.org.

Federal agencies that promote active living include

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm.

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health.

President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, www.fitness.gov.

Others

National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity, www.ncppa.org

National Association for Health and Fitness, www.physicalfitness.org

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *www.rwjf.org*

Rural Non-Farm Communities

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: RURAL NON-FARM COMMUNITIES

Who They Are

Rural America[1] is more than farms. In fact, in 1997 farm production accounted for only 7 percent of nonmetro jobs. All farm and farm-related industries (including agricultural services and peripherally related industries like agricultural wholesale and retail trade) accounted for a total of only 23 percent of nonmetro jobs[2]. Rural communities take a variety of forms — from isolated areas and Indian Reservations to semi-suburban towns on the fringes of growing metropolitan areas[3]. They may be affluent "bedroom communities" or areas of extreme poverty. These communities are an important part of the growth puzzle that has not always been adequately addressed. How does redirecting growth into existing areas affect small towns or areas that are struggling economically?

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

Issues for communities will vary according to size, demographics, economic health, proximity to larger cities and state policies. In general, rural areas continue to face a number of challenges:

- **Affordable housing** — affordability is a growing problem in rural areas, particularly for low- and moderate-income Americans. According to a 2000 report by the Housing Assistance Council, approximately 4.7 million non-metro households (21 percent) pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income for housing costs and are considered cost-burdened[4].
- **Economic development and growth** — because some rural areas lost population and industry in the last several decades, many communities are in need of jobs and economic opportunity. These areas need an infusion of investment and community economic development.
- **Loss of open space/degradation of environment** — rural areas are increasingly seeing the loss of farmland and open space to large-lot, single-family homes and suburban-style developments.
- **Community character** — many small towns and more remote areas are facing loss of historic and cultural resources as well as the unique, regional feel of many areas to a monoculture of chain stores and generic architecture.
- **Community capacity** — rural areas do not have the same staff and resources as metropolitan areas when it comes to planning. This makes it a challenge to address smart growth issues.

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[1] The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development uses the U.S. Census definition of rural, which classifies as rural open country or places with a population of less than 2,500. The USDA Rural Housing Service defines rural as any town, village, city, or place with a population not in excess of 10,000 that is rural in character, or with a population center up to 20,000 with a serious lack of mortgage credit.

[2] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, http://ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmandRelatedEmployment/

[3] Metropolitan areas are defined as areas or places with a minium population of 50,000 or a Census Bureau-defined urbanized area and a total MA population of at least 100,000 (75,000 in New England). Nonmetropolitan Areas are places outside Metropolitan Areas that have populations below 50,000. Both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas contain rural and urban populations.

[4] **Housing Assistance Council**, *Why Housing Matters: HAC's 2000 Report on the State of the Nation's Rural Housing.*

Rural Non-Farm Communities

Involvement of rural communities and organizations in smart growth is uneven. Since smart growth has focused more on metropolitan areas and the effects of suburban sprawl, nonmetro communities have not been as involved as communities in metropolitan regions. The level of understanding of and involvement in smart growth is higher in states with growth measures in place.

The level of support for different types of growth measures varies based on demographics and geography. Communities in economic decline have different needs than those that are facing rapid growth. Communities on the fringe of a metropolitan area face different growth pressures than more isolated areas. New arrivals to rural areas may favor different options for housing, commercial areas and services than longer-term residents. The key for all communities is finding a balance between the beneficial aspects of smart growth (such as preserving open space and increasing housing options), the need for sustainable economic development, and the desire to preserve important characteristics of a community, such as environmental resources or historic districts.

Reaching Out

Smart growth principles such as fostering distinctive, attractive places, providing a range of housing choices, and preserving open space will appeal to many residents of rural areas. Likewise, NNC's Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth provide a framework for encouraging development that protects rural areas' unique character while providing more opportunities for housing, jobs and services and amenities at a range of incomes.

Every community will have its own unique set of circumstances to consider when discussing growth issues, but these are some of the issues that may come up related to smart growth in rural areas:

- **Density** — Some residents may be turned off by the word "density" because it conjures up images of closely packed apartment buildings. When talking about smart growth, it is important to show that density is not just high-rise apartment buildings, but a range of choices from single-family homes with smaller lot sizes ("cluster developments" in rural areas) to duplexes, apartments above shops in towns, and small apartment buildings.
- **Smart growth vs. no growth** — Many rural communities are desperately in need of economic opportunity. Make it clear that smart growth does not mean no growth, but rather a more thoughtful way of approaching development so that it better fits a community's social, environmental and economic characteristics and needs.
- **Affordable housing** — Some housing advocates have raised concerns that growth controls may make it difficult to develop affordable housing, particularly in rural areas. Work with housing advocates to develop options that can promote smarter growth while preserving affordability.
- **NIMBYism** — in some places, opposition to changes in the demographic makeup of a community have been cloaked in efforts to control growth or protect open space. For example, density may be opposed because residents have a perception that multifamily housing will bring an influx of very low-income people.

Rural Non-Farm Communities

To gain support for their efforts, advocates need effective outreach and education materials to show people exactly what smart growth means for rural communities. The smart growth movement needs the support of rural communities because they are a critical part of the growth puzzle. Without better growth practices in both metropolitan areas and smaller rural communities, growth will continue to gobble up open space and farmland. If you are looking for partners to reach out to rural communities in your area, try rural community development corporations or community action agencies, farmland preservation advocates, economic development agencies, planning departments, and USDA Rural Extension officers.

Other Resources

Housing Assistance Council (HAC), 202-842-8600, www.ruralhome.org. See the winter 2001/2002 issue (Vol. 7/No. 1) of Rural Voices, HAC's quarterly magazine, which examines smart growth, development, and rural housing. HAC has regional offices in the Midwest, West, Southeast, and Southwest.

National Association of Counties (NACo), 202-393-6226, www.naco.org. See information about their Rural County Governance Center.

National Association of Development Officials, 202-624-7806, www.nado.org. provides training, information and representation for regional development organizations in small metropolitan communities and rural America.

National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED), 202-289-9020, www.ncced.org. National trade association for CDCs with approximately 600 member CDCs. Web site includes links to state associations of community development organizations.

National Rural Housing Coalition, www.nrhcweb.org.

Rural Community Assistance Program, 202-408-1273, www.rcap.org. Provides technical assistance and training to rural communities.

Rural LISC, 202-739-9283, www.ruralisc.org. Works to build the capacity of resident-led rural community development corporations.

USDA Rural Development Program, www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html. Web page has a list of state offices.

Transportation Advocates

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT GUIDE: TRANSPORTATION ADVOCATES

Who They Are

Transportation advocates work on smart growth at the local, regional, state and national levels. Many are concerned with proposals for new highway construction and road widenings that may lead to higher taxes, disinvestment in existing communities, loss of open space, and more air pollution and traffic congestion. Others are opposed to the location of polluting transportation facilities such as bus depots and highways in low-income communities, and other inequities in transportation services and burdens. Today's transportation movement seeks policy reforms to create a better connected, more equitable, more efficient, more environmentally sustainable, more convenient and more affordable system.

Over the last ten years, this movement has grown from a handful of national organizations concerned with transportation choices, the environment, social equity, historic preservation, and planning, to more than 800 organization and activists working at the neighborhood, local, regional, state and national levels. While some organizations are local chapters, offices or affiliates of national organizations such as the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) and the Transportation Equity Network (TEN), most transportation advocacy groups determine their own priorities and work in coalitions. One example of this is the Alliance for the New Transportation Charter (ANTC), a new broad-based coalition led by STPP. ANTC is seeking to advance environmental, social equity, livability, public health and economic prosperity outcomes through transportation decision-making.

Their Issues And How They Relate To Smart Growth

In recent years, a number of success stories have begun to define a new vision for transportation — one that sees transportation as a tool to build livable, healthy, prosperous and just communities . Several state and local groups have successfully advocated for state legislation to prioritize road maintenance over new road construction and to fund projects that make it safe for kids to walk or bike to school. Many low-income neighborhoods and communities of color have worked to expand transit service and improve access to transit. These gains have resulted in better access to jobs through innovative transit services and mixed-uses around transit stations that include affordable housing, job training, childcare, and health care facilities. Although the “bus vs. rail” schism has pitted transportation advocates against each other in several regions, recently a growing number of regions have also effectively campaigned for new rail systems, thanks to strong, diverse coalitions including elected officials, business and civic associations, transportation advocates, social equity groups, environmental activists and other public interest organizations.

Transportation advocates around the country are also focused on the 2003 reauthorization of the TEA 21, Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. TEA 21 is the federal transportation law that affects a host of transportation issues — from access to jobs through better transportation, to funding for bike lanes, improved air quality and local transportation planning. TEA 21 is the successor to the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), which was signed into law in 1991.

Transportation Advocates

Reaching Out

NNC's Neighborhood Principles for Smart Growth reflect many of the concerns shared by transportation advocates. These groups promote place-based transportation investments in urban and rural communities, meaningful community participation, and access to jobs, education and training and needed services for all people. The smart growth movement benefits from transportation advocates' knowledge of the transportation sector , which invests $200 billion a year in governmental expenditures that can either support or undermine community goals.

The smart growth movement also benefits from the involvement of groups like TEN and other organizations concerned with the social justice and equity impacts of transportation decisions. Transportation advocacy coalitions that have embraced social equity are pushing innovative policies that use a number of different transit modes and smart growth tools with a range of environmental, fiscal and social benefits. For example, advocates in the San Francisco Bay Area are building support for a state bill that would provide additional transportation funds to local governments that locate affordable housing near transit stations. This program is modeled after the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Housing Incentive Program.

A wide range of organizations participate in transportation advocacy. Bicycling, walking, transit and rail interest groups such as America Bikes, America Walks, the New Starts Working Group, the Community Transportation Association of America, and the National Association of Railroad Passengers actively promote multi-modal transportation investments. The Sierra Club, Environmental Defense, and other environmental nonprofits have a major stake in transportation, as do unions such as the Amalgamated Transit Union and the Transport Workers Union of America. National groups such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Congress for the New Urbanism, and Scenic America are also linking transportation with their efforts to develop and enhance communities through strategies ranging from affordable housing to landscape preservation. The American Heart Association and the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity have also become more interested in transportation reform because of the relationship between obesity and sedentary lifestyles.

Transportation advocates have worked closely with business groups such as the Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce and the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and with developers to build support for transit and transit-oriented development. A number of nonprofit groups have also developed or are currently campaigning for special transit passes for university students, employees, and low-income children who take transit to school. These efforts have evolved as transportation groups have partnered with transportation management associations, universities, employers, faith-based organizations and transit providers.

Transportation groups make good partners for the smart growth movement. They are consumer watchdogs who track transportation policy and funding decisions by elected officials, metropolitan

Transportation Advocates

planning organizations and transit agencies. At the state, regional, and local level, their constructive opposition to controversial transportation projects holds the line on sprawl, while building support for reinvestment and new growth. Some areas of disagreement have surfaced in the transportation community in recent years. The challenge to smart growth advocates is to analyze pros and cons of the options and help arrive at decisions that appear most likely to accord with the community's long-term goals.

Finding a Local Representative

Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), 202-466-2636, www.transact.org. For information on transportation groups involved with smart growth in your area, contact Andrea Broaddus at 202-974-5136.

Alliance For A New Transportation Charter, (ANTC), www.antc.net. Web page includes a listing of national, state, and local groups who have endorsed the New Transportation Charter or to become a member of the Alliance for a New Transportation Charter.

TEA-3 Campaign. For more information on **TEA-21 reauthorization** contact Nancy Jakowitsch at STPP, 202-974-5130, or go to www.tea3.org.

Center for Community Change, *Transportation Equity Network*, 202-342-0567, www.transportationequity.org.

Environmental Justice Resource Center, www.ejrc.cau.edu

Local Initiatives Support Corporation, www.liscnet.org

Other Resources

America Bikes, www.americabikes.org

Community Transportation Association of America, http://www.ctaa.org

Environmental Defense, www.environmentaldefense.org

Great American Station Foundation, www.stationfoundation.org

National Center for Bicycling and Walking, www.bikefed.org

National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, www.enhancements.org

Smart Growth America, www.smartgrowthamerica.org

Transit Vote, www.ctaa.org/transitvote

PART VI

APPENDICES

SECTIONS:

1 Smart Growth, Better Neighborhoods Case Study Abstracts

2 Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Abstracts

Case Study

In 2000 the National Neighborhood Coalition published a set of case studies, "Smart Growth, Better Neighborhoods: Communities Leading the Way," that examined the role of community-based organizations in promoting smart growth and regional solutions to sprawl. The following are abstracts from the 15 case studies featured in the report. For more information, see www.neighborhoodcoalition.org.

Campaign to Restore Transit Funding
Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC)
San Francisco Bay Area, CA

The Transportation and Land Use Coalition (TALC) was formed in 1997 to address regional inequities in transportation spending in the San Francisco Bay Area. Coalition members began their work by focusing on the regional transportation plan (RTP), which is updated every two years and guides transportation investment for the next twenty years.

The Bay Area's current growth patterns are causing tremendous economic, environmental, and social harm. In the fall of 1997, the coalition embarked on a campaign to create an alternative regional transportation plan for the Bay Area that would benefit the region as a whole and all its residents. After it met for months with concerned citizens, coalition members were outraged when the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) proposed slashing the budgets of four transit operators — AC Transit, BART, Caltrain, and Golden Gate Transit. At the same time, the MTC was proposing $10 billion in highway projects. Coalition members organized a letter-writing campaign, met with local community groups to raise awareness of the issue, and held meetings with MTC commissioners to demand that the commissioners restore the proposed cuts to the transit budget. In October 1998, MTC commissioners acknowledged the wishes of communities throughout the region, voting unanimously to restore a $375 million shortfall in transit funding. It was the first time the commissioners had rejected their own staff's recommendation.

Public transit is an integral part of many peoples' lives, providing access to jobs, schools, shopping, services, and recreation. Inequities in transportation spending that favor highways over funding for public transit have dramatic effects on lower-income individuals who rely heavily on transit. By restoring transit funding, MTC opened the possibility to an alternative way of thinking about transportation issues, one that encompasses the needs of all communities in a region. The coalition's alternative regional transportation plan is about much more than transit. It is, fundamentally, a smart growth planning process that refocuses public investment to serve existing developed areas, providing financial assistance through transportation infrastructure and direct incentives to promote additional affordable housing near transit and major job centers. Doing so would save open space by providing urban infill housing, serve employers who are having a harder time recruiting and retaining workers from nearby, and help those dependent on transit by bringing jobs closer to home as well as increasing the overall level of transit service. The alternative regional transportation plan is seen by all groups working on this issue as a critical cornerstone of increasing

stability in the region.

Campaign for Regional Solutions
Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA)
Baltimore, MD

The Citizens Planning and Housing Association is a community-based organization that has been organizing in Baltimore, Maryland, for more than 50 years around housing, sanitation, crime, and other issues. Its Campaign for Regional Solutions was launched in 1996, when it became apparent to the association's leadership that many persisting economic, environmental, and social challenges could be fully understood only in the larger context of regional patterns and policies and effectively addressed only through regional action.

The overall goal of the campaign is to engage citizens in developing and pursuing an agenda of regional strategies and reforms that hold promise for ensuring the long-term vitality of the Baltimore metropolitan region. The core activities of the campaign are outreach and coalition building, documentation of regional trends and conditions along with the policies driving them, and advocacy in the public and political arenas for policy reforms. The campaign's first two policy objectives revolved around 1) regional transportation planning and investment and the principles of smart growth, environmental quality, equity of opportunity, and community quality of life, and 2) mechanisms for sharing the region's resources equitably to reduce disproportionate fiscal disparities among jurisdictions. The campaign is currently considering taking on affordable housing and race as the next issues on its agenda.

Thus far the campaign has succeeded in bringing federally mandated changes to Baltimore's regional transportation planning; obtaining a federal grant for demonstration projects in community-based coordination of land-use and transportation planning; raising legislative interest in regional revenue-growth sharing; procuring agreement by Baltimore's metropolitan planning organization to conduct a comprehensive, inclusive regional-visioning process; increasing the number of its allies in every jurisdiction of the region; and getting the attention of the media and policy-makers. The Citizens Planning and Housing Association's experience offers many lessons for community-based organizations considering taking on a regional agenda.

Lehigh Valley Spirit of Investment Campaign
Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley
Bethlehem, PA

The Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV) serves low-income residents concentrated in the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton, PA. CACLV provides community development and social services, including food assistance, homeownership counseling, job training, a micro-lending program, a renter education program, and a shelter for homeless families. There is a strong regional focus to its work. The organization has been instrumental in urging Lehigh Valley's public, civic, and corporate leadership to recognize the interdependence between the cities and the surrounding region and arguing persuasively that the flow of capital out of the inner cities to the suburbs will eventually destroy both. One early effort was convincing suburban municipalities to fund existing homeless shelters in the region's cities. (So far, 14 of the 59 suburban municipalities have provided funding.)

CACLV's regional work expanded beyond shelters when they began to work with the Lehigh Valley Partnership, the area's corporate leadership, to develop a strategic plan for the region. For more than a year, hundreds of people participated in developing the plan called the "Lehigh Valley Spirit of Investment." CACLV was an important liaison to low-income residents, bringing their concerns to the planning process. The resulting plan is a progressive document that gives its blessing to a number of public policy initiatives.

The "Lehigh Valley Spirit of Investment" meshes with CACLV's advocacy efforts and is the basis for its new initiative regarding open space and recreation. CACLV is leading the campaign to pass funding for the open-space preservation and recreation initiative called for in the plan, insisting upon an entitlement allocation for urban communities to buy properties to create parks and playgrounds. The widely supported concept has grown to a request for a $120 million Green Fund, with $60 million to be raised from each of the two counties, Lehigh and Northampton, comprising the valley. CACLV, through the Lehigh Valley Coalition on Affordable Housing, is also taking the lead in implementation of the plan's housing goals. The Lehigh Valley Partnership and CACLV are continuing to promote the "Spirit of Investment's" key recommendations to an interested state government and trying to find needed support for the plan's most politically challenging issues: consolidation of services at the county level, tax-base sharing, and countywide land-use planning.

Small Communities Rural Leadership Development
HandMade in America
Asheville, NC

HandMade in America aims to promote sustainable economic development, protect the natural environment, and preserve the unique artistic and cultural heritage of Western North Carolina. This rural area enjoys natural beauty and a strong community of artists and craftspeople. While these local assets have attracted new residents, especially retirees, rural areas in North Carolina have also been hard hit by the decline in its two major industries, textiles and tobacco. Growth in the area has been uneven and some trends threaten existing residents and businesses.

Outside of major metropolitan areas, small towns across the United States with limited economic assets, and little if any planning capacity, face stagnation and decline or become the next frontier for development that continues to spread outward from city and suburb. North Carolina's rural areas are no different. The Small Towns Revitalization Program was created by HandMade in America in 1996 in response to requests from communities that were too small to have professionally trained town managers and planners. HandMade then established the Small Communities Rural Leadership Development Initiative in 1998 to create a civic leadership corps to successfully undertake challenging but tangible improvement projects in these small towns. The initiative is a cooperative effort with the Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Teams of representatives from participating small towns carry out local community projects while taking part in training sessions throughout the year. Participants learn how to successfully plan, implement, and maintain increasingly sophisticated projects. In the first year, community projects included new parks and public facilities, as well as the renovation of buildings and public art and beautification efforts. Some 40 representatives of the first six small towns participating in the program completed the second year-long training and mentoring program in the spring of 1999.

Later that year, five new communities were added to the small towns program and leadership training continued with an emphasis on veteran towns mentoring the new towns. One of the important outcomes of HandMade's efforts was the identification of the crafts industry as an important asset that could help sustain the local economy. HandMade in America is seeking ongoing funding to expand its training program and direct funding for the eleven involved communities to carry out their identified projects and for HandMade to test the effectiveness of its training.

Sustainable Economic Development Initiative
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
Wiscasset, ME

Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI) has worked to bring appropriate economic development strategies to rural communities throughout Maine since 1977. CEI plays an important role in preserving Maine's farming and fishing heritage, the traditional employment sectors of the state's economy, and providing employment and affordable housing opportunities. CEI projects help lower-income and underserved populations and foster sustainable communities by addressing such grassroots issues as adequate housing for workers, affordable child care, livable-wage jobs, and industries in harmony with Maine's environment, natural resources, and heritage.

CEI's Sustainable Economic Development Initiative (SEDI) was initiated in 1998, partly in response to the closing of a nuclear power plant in Lincoln County and the resulting economic impact on the region. The initiative was a natural extension of CEI's focus on economy, ecology, and equity, the "three E's" of sustainable development, in its community development work. SEDI encourages sustainable economic development in Lincoln County by providing financing and technical assistance, encouraging public and private partnerships for economic development, expanding training and educational opportunities related to sustainable development, promoting sustainable development policies; and collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data on successful sustainable development practices.

To date, CEI has invested about $2,000,000 in Lincoln County businesses through the SEDI and other programs. It has leveraged $7,000,000 in 35 different projects throughout the county. One major CEI success is a partnership whereby CEI acts as the provider of planning and economic development services for Lincoln County. CEI has also initiated a conservation easement with a local association on a CEI-owned property along the Sheepscot River, an important Atlantic salmon breeding habitat. CEI's strategy of strengthening traditional employment sectors, promoting strong communities, and preserving natural resources serves as a model for linking sustainable development and smart growth in rural communities.

Inclusionary Housing Initiative
Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
Minneapolis - St. Paul, MN

The Minneapolis - St. Paul region is faced with a growing affordable housing crisis, particularly in the faster growing parts of the region, where entry-level jobs are being created. The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability is a coalition of groups that has been successfully working to address the shortage of affordable housing and related equity and livability issues.

In 1999, The alliance succeeded in getting inclusionary housing legislation passed in the Minnesota state legislature. Inclusionary zoning policies increase the supply of affordable housing by creating for private builders incentives such as density bonuses, reduced setbacks, reduced parking requirements, decreased road widths, and fast-track permitting. The Alliance-backed legislation provides incentives to builders willing to make 10 to 15 percent of units in new developments affordable at lower-incomes. Inclusionary housing creates more choices for low- and moderate-income people to live closer to jobs and benefit from shorter commutes. It also promotes healthy communities with a mixture of income levels.

Entry-level job opportunities are often located in fast-growing suburbs on the fringes of a region, far from central cities and older, inner-ring suburbs. While suburban communities benefit from infrastructure investments for schools, roads, and sewer systems, these same communities often institute restrictive zoning and housing codes that prevent low-income people from finding housing that is close to jobs.

The Alliance was able to build a broad base of support for the housing legislation by nurturing relationships among environmental groups, social justice organizations, the business community, and builders. Members also cultivated support among suburban elected officials and are now working with these new partners to address other regional issues such as transportation and employment opportunities.

Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization
Emerson Park Development Corporation
East St. Louis, IL

The Emerson Park Development Corporation (EPDC) is a leader in community revitalization efforts for East St. Louis, a city that has suffered from years of disinvestment and abandonment. For the past ten years EPDC has partnered with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to develop neighborhood revitalization plans, rehab and build new houses, and plant trees and grass, replacing hundreds of derelict and abandoned buildings in its 55-block neighborhood. It aims to re-create a vibrant mixed-income neighborhood through its comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plan with strategies for housing and economic development, crime prevention, human services, infrastructure upgrades, and community organizing.

Transit-oriented development is a key element of EPDC's strategy to attract middle-income residents and businesses to the neighborhood and stem flight from the inner city. EPDC along with local residents and numerous partners, including the University of Illinois, was instrumental in bringing a light rail station to the community. The rail station is central to the Emerson Park's comprehensive redevelopment plan, which includes new housing and retail near the station, which opened in 2001. Along with its partners EPDC is developing Parsons Place, a 174-unit mixed-income rental housing development adjacent to the transit center that will be one of the first new housing developments in East St. Louis in years. EPDC also participates in the East St. Louis Enterprise Community and in the St. Louis Regional Empowerment Zone. EPDC has transformed itself from a grass-roots neighborhood association into a strong citizen-driven community development corporation. The ability to collaborate with organizations at all levels and to combine a variety of revenue sources has led to its success.

Transit-Oriented Development and Focused Area Development
Bethel New Life
Chicago, IL

Bethel New Life, a faith-based community development corporation on Chicago's West Side, is reaching beyond its neighborhood boundaries to link public transportation to housing, commercial and industrial development, and employment opportunities for neighborhood residents. Through an evolving, sustainable approach to community development and partnerships with other community-based groups, technical-assistance groups, and the city, Bethel has developed a strategy for smart growth in West Garfield Park, an urban neighborhood that has struggled with high rates of poverty, unemployment, abandonment, and crime. After engaging in a successful broad-based coalition effort to save an important public transit route, the Lake Street elevated train line, Bethel worked with the Center for Neighborhood Technology to craft a redevelopment strategy focused around the train station. The result was a comprehensive neighborhood plan that created a transit-oriented development in the area of the train station (with new commercial, industrial and residential spaces) and four focused area developments in walking distance of the stop that include affordable, energy-efficient housing, traffic-calming techniques, and green spaces.

New housing and businesses draw in more community residents, and transit-oriented development serves as a destination for train passengers. The overall effect is a more attractive neighborhood, with fewer vacant lots and polluted brownfields, more opportunities, and a greater sense of community. To date, 42 of 200 planned affordable homes have been built on formerly vacant lots within walking distance to transit. Visible changes made within the focused area developments, including gardens, landscaping, and six new community parks, were identified by residents as one of the community's most important assets. At the transit station, most of the land has been assembled for mixed-use development at the transit station and construction began in mid-2000 on a "smart building" using environmentally friendly design and construction principles. Bethel has attracted a grocery store and a bank to the commercial corridor near the train station. The group signed development contracts for sites at an adjacent industrial park, which will bring 285 new jobs to the neighborhood. Bethel president Mary Nelson calls the group's program the "flip side of suburban sprawl," and says that it is an example of putting all the pieces together for a healthy, sustainable, urban community.

Access to Jobs Campaign and the Jubilee Housing Plan
Building Responsibility, Equality and Dignity (BREAD)
Columbus, OH

Since 1996, Building Responsibility, Equality and Dignity (BREAD) has evolved from a small group of clergy and lay volunteers to an organization representing 38 urban and suburban congregations and more than 35,000 members in and around Columbus, Ohio. BREAD has focused on poverty, crime, housing, transportation, and education and has worked to instill hope among its members and build relationships across racial, economic, geographic, and religious lines. Its work has led the organization to reach beyond central city neighborhoods to address larger issues of regional inequity.

Since 1997, BREAD has targeted the need for better access to jobs for the poor and unemployed and has worked with the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) and the mayor's office to bring transit centers and increased bus service to central city residents. To date, one bus transit center has been opened, and 38,000 new hours of bus service have been added in the region. Facilities for child care, employment training, and health care have been developed at the first transit center, and BREAD and COTA are worked to secure funding for a second transit center, which opened in 2001. The transit centers and new express bus service link workers in central city neighborhoods to jobs in the suburbs.

BREAD is also focusing on the need to provide more affordable housing throughout the Columbus region, so that workers can afford to live in the communities where they work. Its proposed approach includes the creation of an affordable housing trust fund, adoption of an ordinance to require that developers include low-income housing in any new development, and creation of a housing reinvestment plan for the central city.

As a nonpartisan faith-based organization, BREAD has been able to draw upon common values and transcend dividing lines that keep people isolated from one another. It has built an awareness of the issue of access to jobs that has fostered better cooperation among stakeholders. Through research, training, and education, it works to ensure that citizens have an opportunity not only to participate, but also to be leaders in decisions related to their neighborhoods and their region.

Decommissioning the Sheridan Expressway
Nos Quedamos, The Point Community Development Corporation, and Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice
Bronx, NY

Three community-based organizations in the South Bronx, Nos Quedamos, The Point Community Development Corporation, and Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, have brought concerns of environmental, social, and economic justice into local and regional discussions of transportation and infrastructure. These partner organizations have been involved individually in planning efforts in their own neighborhoods but together have also focused on the burden of highways that pass through their community and the need for more parks and open space.

Nos Quedamos, The Point, and Youth Ministries are currently working with community residents, elected officials, and other organizations in calling for the demolition of the Sheridan Expressway and the conversion of the resulting space into a park. In response to the New York State Department of Transportation's (DOT) proposal to spend $420 million to reconstruct the underused Bruckner and Sheridan Expressways interchange and build a link between the Sheridan and Bronx River Parkway, the community groups developed an alternative plan that would create a new 28-acre greenway. The removal of the Sheridan overpass would return light and fresh air to a community that is fragmented by highways, lacks parks and open space, and suffers from some of the highest asthma rates in the nation. It would allow the creation of bike and pedestrian paths connecting existing parks along the Bronx River and joining residential and commercial areas to a waterfront that is currently blocked off and subject to polluting land uses. The coalition of organizations has produced a report showing that closing the expressway will add little or no new congestion to local streets.

The three organizations are building support for their campaign and are advocating for DOT to include the deconstruction of the Sheridan Expressway as an option in an environmental impact statement. DOT's plans for the Sheridan Expressway are currently on hold. The coalition has succeeded in raising awareness about the transportation planning process and the need for community involvement.

Anti-Sprawl Campaign
Sustainable Little Rock
Little Rock, AR

Sustainable Little Rock is a coalition that has built a citywide campaign in the Arkansas capital supportive of sustainable growth policies. The coalition formed in 1998 and consists of environmental, community, labor, and political organizations, including ACORN, the Coalition of Little Rock Neighborhoods, the National Education Association, the New Party, the Sierra Club, and Service Employees International Union Local 100. The coalition supports a comprehensive agenda that includes strategies for infill development in central city neighborhoods, an open housing policy, preservation of green space, living-wage job creation, and enhanced public transportation.

The coalition's campaign was first organized in 1999 in low- and moderate-income minority neighborhoods and has continued to grow. The coalition is bringing together low-income African Americans, white working-class residents, and middle-class environmentalists as a powerful force for smart growth and sensible development in a traditionally segregated and polarized city.

The campaign's initial focus was a public critique of city growth and land annexation policies that had been heavily influenced by development and real estate interests and that had created traditional patterns of suburban sprawl and inner city abandonment. Although a smart growth ordinance was defeated in 1999 by the city council, the coalition built momentum for sustaining the anti-sprawl movement. The coalition is campaigning for revised policies for economic development, transportation, housing, the environment, and education. One of its partners, the New Party, will concentrate on city and state-level elections in 2000 to gain power to pass policies to ensure that all citizens share equitably in the benefits of growth.

Neighborhood Land-use Plan
El Concilio
Austin, TX

El Concilio is a 22-year-old coalition of East Austin Mexican American neighborhood associations dedicated to preserving and protecting the ethnic and historical traditions of its community. El Concilio promotes self-determination among residents by attempting to increase their power to effect positive change for their neighborhoods.

East Austin's Mexican American neighborhoods are centrally located and face increasing development pressures as Austin experiences rapid growth. El Concilio's efforts have focused on organizing, educating, and involving the community in efforts to influence land-use, zoning, and planning processes. El Concilio was instrumental in getting the City Council to pass the East Austin overlay requiring developers to present their plans to residents and neighborhood associations at public hearings prior to beginning work. El Concilio's organizing led to the defeat in 1999 of the

Pecan Street Festival Park project, which would have brought 300,000 people yearly to a small, quiet neighborhood. El Concilio assisted the Gardens Neighborhood Association in its successful effort to have a dangerous recycling plant condemned and the land used for city offices.

Building on its many years of preparing comprehensive land-use plans, El Concilio worked to shape the East Austin neighborhood plan under Austin's Smart Growth Initiative. With its neighborhood designated as a Desired Development Zone, El Concilio is educating residents and advocating to maintain the Mexican American community's integrity and traditions in the face of increasing development, gentrification, and land speculation. El Concilio hopes to bring about environmental justice and smarter growth by promoting the residents' vision of a livable community, with affordable housing and safe streets, green space and parks, and adequate health, educational, and social services. El Concilio joins forces with neighborhood associations in other parts of Austin that also want to determine what kind of growth is beneficial for their communities and to change top-down neighborhood planning processes that allow development decisions to be made without their participation or consent.

Community Engagement Demonstration Project
New Schools — Better Neighborhoods
Los Angeles, CA

New Schools — Better Neighborhoods (NSBN) was formed in May 1999 with a simple mission — create schools as centers of communities, and communities as centers of learning. NSBN seeks to permanently alter the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) approach to siting, selecting, designing, and programming schools by involving neighborhood residents in the decision-making process from beginning to end. It links smart growth with smart schools by using the existing infrastructure to create small, community-centered schools that serve as anchors in neighborhoods by providing a range of services that can be used by all. The new schools can make communities stronger and cities more desirable places to live, stemming the exodus to the suburbs. Where more students can walk to school fewer funds are needed for busing, low-income parents without cars can participate in school activities, and traffic is reduced.

NSBN worked closely with the Beverly-Kingsley Neighborhood Association, a community-civic steering committee of nearly 100 people, and a facilities planning and architecture firm to develop a community-supported plan for a new set of smaller, better-sited elementary schools in an area where LAUSD had targeted building a 1,500-student school. The school district's plan would have displaced 30 families and destroyed a number of Craftsman-style homes and an apartment building. Having been convinced of NSBN's approach, LAUSD has committed to conducting feasibility studies on six sites proposed by the community that would replace mostly blighted commercial properties. If built, the new schools will address needs such as the lack of recreation space and after school programs. The community-engagement demonstration led the School Board to replicate the exercise as a model throughout the district for planning new facilities for the projected 85,000 additional students in the coming five years. NSBN succeeded in maintaining autonomy from a large, troubled bureaucracy and created an attitude of greater awareness in the school district that fundamental reform in facilities development is needed to attain the district's educational goals. No other effort in the past two decades has met with the success of NSBN.

Transportation, Development and Environment Initiative
Sustainable Roxbury Coalition Alternatives for Community and Environment, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Egleston Square Neighborhood Association, and Project RIGHT
Boston, MA

The Sustainable Roxbury Coalition was convened in early 1999 by Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE). The coalition's goal is to ensure community participation in Boston's city planning process and in decisions about transportation, housing, economic development, and the environment that affect the health and safety of Roxbury residents. ACE coordinates the efforts of the coalition, whose other members are the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, the Egleston Square Neighborhood Association, and Project RIGHT. These organizations have a history of working independently and together to revitalize and bring economic and environmental justice to the community. Roxbury is the poorest of Boston's neighborhoods; 95 percent of its residents are persons of color.

Many proposed developments for the Roxbury area have been and remain contrary to smart growth, adding to air pollution, traffic congestion, and soaring asthma rates. Sustainable Roxbury Coalition members participate in regional and citywide coalitions to share concerns and build support for sustainable solutions that in the long term will require new citywide or regional policies, plans, and programs, rather than simply shifting growth from the suburbs to the inner city.

The coalition illustrates how a group of organizations can come together to help residents envision sustainable, equitable development and advocate for it. It succeeded in getting commitments for a comprehensive air-quality and transportation study of future development in Dudley Square and for resident participation in development planning in Jackson Square. The coalition's successful efforts in fighting environmental injustice include re-siting and redesign of a large parking garage, building an active community working group, and educating residents about the development process. The coalition is currently focused on developing a smart growth vision for Roxbury, influencing the master plan on issues concerning transportation, economic development, and housing, and expanding its support in the community.

Open Space Management Program
New Kensington CDC
Philadelphia, PA

The city of Philadelphia's population declined from its height of slightly more than 2 million people in 1950 to 1.4 million people today, while the suburbs surged to 3.4 million people. Businesses and residents fleeing Philadelphia for the suburbs left behind thousands of abandoned buildings and vacant lots. Such vacant areas depress property values and lead to increased crime and disinvestment by residents and businesses The city spends about $10 million each year tearing down empty structures.

The New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC) created its Open Space Management Program in 1996 to address a top concern of this working-class neighborhood. Community residents wanted to reclaim for side yards, community gardens, and parks, the

abandoned, littered vacant land blighting their neighborhood. Concerned residents contributed many volunteer hours improving the natural environment by clearing trash, planting trees and plants, and tending to gardens. NKCDC and its key partner, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, worked with various city agencies and others to halt the illegal dumping of construction waste on vacant lots, create community gardens and a Garden Center that educates residents and provides them with garden supplies, and establish a property transfer program.

By early 2000, Open Space had cleaned and "greened" nearly half of the vacant lots in the neighborhood, that is, 300 parcels on 9.5 acres of land. The city designated the neighborhood an urban renewal area, at NKCDC's request, to enable it to acquire abandoned lots by eminent domain. The presence of illegal drug dealing near the community gardens and parks has diminished, and community pride increased. Real estate data show that the housing market is active, and some residents have told the Open Space Director that they have changed their minds about moving away because they see the neighborhood improving. The organization is now developing plans to redevelop abandoned factories and warehouses and restore economic vitality to the neighborhood. Its first brownfields redevelopment project is a hydroponic farm on a vacant factory site. The Open Space Management Program has been used as a model by the city of Philadelphia for vacant land reuse and management programs citywide. Through its partnership with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the program has become a national model for open space management in urban communities.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations

What is an MPO?

Since the enactment of the 1962 Federal-Aid Highway Act, each urbanized area with a population of 50,000 or more persons has been required to establish a ***Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).*** An urbanized area, as defined by the Census Bureau, is composed of one or more "central places" plus the adjacent, densely settled "urban fringe" (a contiguous territory having a density of at least 1,000 persons per square mile). While the organizational structure and philosophy of each MPO may differ as a reflection of local needs and conditions, the overall purpose of each MPO is the same: to conduct a transportation planning process that is "***continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive***" (23 USC 134(f) & 49 USC app. 1607(f)).

Based on the 2000 Census, there are now 453 urbanized areas in the United States (plus another 13 in Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Northern Marianas Islands). These range in size from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin (population 50,028) to New York-Newark (population 17,799,861). However, the number of urbanized areas does not equate to a like number of MPOs. Some MPOs, such as those in New York, San Francisco, or Dallas, represent multiple urbanized areas.

The "**3-C**" planning process merits further explanation as it provides the foundation for all work conducted by MPOs.

- **Continuing** — The process must be on-going, adjusting to changes in the urban form and conditions over time, and not a one-time effort.
- **Cooperative** — The process should include all affected governments (e.g., local, regional, state and federal), industries (e.g., transit, freight, construction trades), and persons, all working in conjunction to achieve a desired end-state.
- **Comprehensive** — The process must consider "all modes of transportation", as well as "the effects of all transportation projects to be undertaken within the metropolitan area".

While membership and format of MPOs can vary, most have a three-tiered structure. The final decision-making body, sometimes called the ***Policy Committee*** or the ***Executive Board***, is composed of the lead elected officials of the region. In addition, some MPOs may include transit operators, state transportation officials, representatives of the business community, or on occasion, citizen representatives. The second tier is often referred to as the Transportation Planning or Technical Advisory Committee. This committee is generally composed of transportation professionals representing the Policy Committee members. The purpose of the committee is to provide technically based recommendations and advice to the policy-makers. The third tier is comprised of a variety of standing or ad hoc committees and represents the level that provides the most opportunity for direct citizen participation in the planning process. Committees that address air quality, bicycle/pedestrian issues, public involvement, or workforce development are among the most common examples found today. The federal transportation agencies are usually involved in these committees, but often in a non-voting capacity.

What MPOs Do

Each MPO is charged with conducting a locally appropriate transportation planning process. This means that the organization has significant latitude in whether or not and how it chooses to address

such issues as highway planning, land use, or even issues such as welfare reform. However, there are some least common denominators, or "elements" that are spelled out in the federal regulations. In fact, there are sixteen specific factors that must be addressed in the planning process (23 CFR 450.316). These range from addressing land use impacts to border crossings to environmental considerations and even to "recreational travel and tourism". In conclusion, MPOs have a broad mandate and range of authority to engage in transportation and community-based planning activities.

MPOs perform many functions; however, every MPO conducts three basic activities:

- **Unified Planning Work Program** — UPWP is a comprehensive budget document that describes all transportation planning activities to be conducted within the metropolitan planning area by the MPO staff and its member organizations.
- **Long Range Plan** — LRP is a fiscally-constrained (i.e., it can include only those projects for which revenues can be reasonably anticipated) multi-modal transportation plan that projects the regional vision, goals, and major projects over a 20 year planning horizon. In areas that don't meet national air quality standards ("non-conforming" areas), the LRP must also be analyzed to ensure the proposed projects do not contribute to further air quality problems.
- **Transportation Improvement Program** — TIP is a fiscally constrained capital improvement budget that includes all federally funded transportation projects (such as roadways, transit, bicycle/pedestrian projects) over a three- to five-year horizon. In areas that don't meet national air quality standards ("non-conforming" areas), the TIP projects must also be analyzed to ensure the proposed projects do not contribute to further air quality problems.

In addition to these three basic functions, some MPOs also conduct the following activities:

- **Air Quality Conformity Analyses** — This is primarily a technical process that relies on a variety of models that estimate air pollution (emissions) based on the characteristics of travel, climate, and facilities. In "non-conforming" areas, both the LRP and the TIP are evaluated for their environmental impacts as part of the policy approval process.
- **Major Metropolitan Transportation Investment Studies** — Large-scale projects may be the subject of special corridor or sub-area planning studies to help define or refine the scope of the decision to be made by the MPO. These studies "*shall consider the direct and indirect costs of reasonable alternatives and such factors as mobility improvements; social, economic, and environmental effects; safety; operating efficiencies; land use and economic development; financing; and energy consumption*." (23 CFR 450.318)

As previously discussed, MPOs generally host a wide variety of committees, both standing and ad hoc. Most MPOs are eager to involve citizens in these processes.

Of particular importance to citizens is the requirement that each MPO develop and adopt a proactive public involvement process "*that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs*"(23 CFR part 450.316). This set of policies and procedures, which is subject to periodic review by both the MPO and USDOT, will provide citizens with detailed information regarding the points of entry into the planning process.

It is also important to understand that MPO staff can be particularly useful allies for citizen groups. Many of these staff are community planners by training, and have a solid understanding and

empathy for the issues facing communities and neighborhoods. Staff are often in a good position to serve as "honest brokers," providing technical information and assistance where possible to help citizens become more actively engaged in the metropolitan planning and decision-making processes.

How to Get in Touch with Your MPO

MPOs can take a number of administrative forms, which can occasionally make them difficult to locate. In larger metropolitan areas, MPOs tend to be independent agencies, often combined with regional planning commission or council of government functions. In smaller metropolitan areas, MPOs are often administratively "hosted" by the county, the principal city, or even the state department of transportation. Because the MPO policy committees include the lead elected officials, MPOs can always be located by contacting the mayor, county executive, or other lead local officials.

The Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) maintains a directory of MPOs and maintains a listing of MPOs on the web at: www.ampo.org.

AMPO, 1730 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, Suite 6008, Washington, DC 20036, 202-296-7051.

Other Resources:

Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 202-366-0150, www.fhwa.dot.gov, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. The Federal Highway Administration is currently working to develop an on-line listing of MPOs and map of MPO planning areas which will be available as part of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics National Transportation Atlas Database.

The following website offers a wealth of information regarding the composition, functions, and roles of Metropolitan Planning Organizations: www.mcb.fhwa.dot.gov/.

Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation Office of Planning, Metropolitan Planning Division, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590

Surface Transportation Policy Project, 202-466-2636, www.transact.org.

For an interesting review of the History of Urban Transportation Planning in the United States, see: www.bts.gov/other/MFD_tmip/papers/history/utp/toc.htm.

PART VII

RESOURCES

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Where to go to Get More Information

Publications by the National Neighborhood Coalition

Smart Growth and Affordable Housing: Making the Connection. National Neighborhood Coalition/Smart Growth Network. www.neighborhoodcoalition.org or contact NNC at 202-408-8553.

Smart Growth, Better Neighborhoods: Communities Leading the Way, www.neighborhoodcoalition.org or contact NNC at 202-408-8553.

Smart Growth for Neighborhoods: Affordable Housing and Regional Vision, www.neighborhoodcoalition.org or contact NNC at 202-408-8553.

Other Publications

Anderson, Geoffrey. (1998). *Why Smart Growth: A Primer.* Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association.

Orfield, Myron. (1997). *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

powell, john a. (Fall 1998). Race and Space: What Really Drives Metropolitan Growth *Brookings Review* 16, no. 4, pg 20-22.

Rusk, David. (1999). *Inside Game, Outside Game.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation, ICMA/Smart Growth Network. Available online at www.smartgrowth.org/pdf/gettosg.pdf or contact ICMA at 202-962-3582.

Growing Smart Neighborhoods: Smart Growth Vocabulary for Community Developers, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, www.liscnet.org.

Smart Growth: Curing Sprawl at its Core, a new publication by LISC, available in October 2002. Contact LISC for more information, 212-455-9800

Where to go to Get More Information

Web Pages

National Neighborhood Coalition, www.neighborhoodcoalition.org. See information about NNC's Neighborhoods, Regions and Smart Growth Project**.**

American Planning Association, www.planning.org. See information about APA's Growing Smart project as well as links to state chapters, helpful publications, and conferences.

Ameregis/Metropolitan Area Research Corporation, www.ameregis.com. See information about using geographic information systems (GIS) as a tool for regional reform.

Development Training Institute, www.dtinational.org. Development Training Institute is compiling a list of organizations that serve as "regional anchors" for smart growth and planning-related issues in their communities. The list will be available on DTI's web page in October 2002, or contact Karen Stokes, 410-338-2512 x 120.

PolicyLink, www.policylink.org. PolicyLink's Equitable Development Toolkit features a set of tools that have been crafted to help community builders achieve diverse, mixed-income/mixed wealth neighborhoods, www.policylink.org/EquitableDevelopment/.

Smart Growth America, www.smartgrowthamerica.org, a coalition of more than 80 national and local organizations promoting a better way to grow.

Smart Growth Network, www.smartgrowth.org. Coordinated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, SGN partners share information on the latest trends in smart growth and make that information readily available to those interested. Visit their site for more information about becoming a member of the Network as well as publications, conferences, and resources on smart growth.

Sprawl Watch Clearinghouse, www.sprawlwatch.org, national, state and local news about efforts to control sprawl and promote better growth.

Acknowledgements

The National Neighborhood Coalition would like to thank the many individuals and organizations that made this tool kit possible. We deeply appreciate the support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for their financial support of our Neighborhoods, Regions and Smart Growth Project. Members of NNC's Smart Growth Committee and Board of Directors provided guidance in creating the tool kit. Committee members contributed many hours conceptualizing, reviewing and commenting on drafts, and contributing examples. The Metropolitan Area Research Corporation/Ameregis (MARC) acted as consultant, providing valuable information about metropolitan and regional dynamics as well as maps featured in this report and writing sections of the tool kit. Anne Disher and Myron Orfield of MARC were of great assistance during this process. Additional support for this project was provided by the Fannie Mae Foundation, Home Depot, and the Ford Foundation.

Finally, NNC would like to thank the following contributing writers:
Phil Bors, Rich Bell, Mark Dessauer, Keecia James, Rich Killingsworth, and Sarah Strunk, Active Living by Design, UNC School of Public Health; Julio Barreto, National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials; David Boyd, FOCUS St. Louis; Sheri DeBoe Johnson, Coalition for Community Schools; Martin Harris, National Association of Counties; Nancy Jakowitsch, Surface Transportation Policy Project; Mafruza Kahn, Good Jobs First; Amy Loder, National Congress for Community Economic Development; Deron Lovaas, Natural Resources Defence Council; Walt Rybeck, Center for Public Dialogue; Kevin Schmidt, American Farmland Trust; Rich Stoltz, Center for Community Change; Leslie Tucker, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Colleen Wagner, Community Action Partnership.

Co-Author	Metropolitan Area Research Corporation/Ameregis
Managing Editor	Leah Kalinosky, NNC
Project Oversight and Management	Betty Weiss, NNC
Design	Eric Townsend/Zinc
Layout	Janice Clark, NNC
Copy Editor	Lucinda Flowers

NNC Smart Growth Committee:

Ken Grossinger, *AFL-CIO* ***(Committee Co-Chair)***
Jeffrey Nugent, *Development Training Institute* ***(Committee Co-Chair)***

Julio Barreto, *National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials*
Noreen Beatley, *Enterprise Foundation*
John Bohm, *National Housing Conference*
Marcie Cohen, *AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust*
Peter Hawley, *American Planning Association*
Nancy Jakowitsch, *Surface Transportation Policy Project*
Mafruza Kahn, *Good Jobs First*
Walt Rybeck, *Center for Public Dialogue*
Julie Seward, *Local Initiatives Support Corporation*
Marcia Sigal, *Council of State Community Development Agencies*
Marvin Silver, *United Church of Christ: Public Life and Social Policy*
Susie Sinclair-Smith, *Local Initiatives Support Corporation*
Karen Stokes, *Development Training Institute*
Mary Stover, *Housing Assistance Council*
Colleen Wagner, *Community Action Partnership*
Nancy Willis, *Unitarian Universalist Affordable Housing Corporation*
Mildred Wurf, *Fund for an Open Society*

Acknowledgements

NNC Board of Directors:

Thomas Shellabarger, ***United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Co-Chair)***

Susie Sinclair-Smith, ***Local Initiatives Support Corporation (Co-Chair)***

Raul Yzaguirre, ***National Council Of La Raza (Founding Chair)***

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British Robinson, ***Jesuit Conference USA (Vice Chair)***

John Leith-Tetrault, ***National Trust For Historic Preservation (Treasurer)***

Steve Tuminaro, ***Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (Secretary)***

Julio Bareto Jr., ***National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials***

Mildred Brown, ***ACORN***

Jane Demarines, ***National American Indian Housing Council***

Richard Dines, ***National Co-Op Business Association***

Ron Field, ***Volunteers Of America***

Allen Fishbein, ***Center For Community Change***

Kirk Gibson, ***National Alliance To End Homelessness***

Debby Goldberg, ***Center For Community Change***

William Grinker, ***Seedco***

Jeff Nugent, ***Development Training Institute***

Brian Peterkin-Vertanesian, ***Community Action Partnership***

Bill Spriggs, ***National Urban League***

Mary Stover, ***Housing Assistance Council***

Ellie Wegener, ***Employment Support Center***

Stockton Willaims, ***The Enterprise Foundation***

Nancy Willis, ***Unitarian Universalist Affordable Housing Corporation***