

Growing Smart Neighborhoods

INFORMATION, MODELS AND TRENDS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPERS

JANUARY 2002

Smart Growth Vocabulary for Community Developers

Smart growth and community development conversations can be amazingly similar and illustrate potential linkages to new partnerships and resources. How familiar are you with the language of smart growth?

- **Infill Development** – The practice of building on vacant or undeveloped parcels in dense areas, especially urban and inner suburban neighborhoods. Promotes **compact development**, which in turn allows undeveloped land to remain open and green. Yes, it is a principle of smart growth!
- **Growth Management** – A central tenet of sustainable development that espouses the idea that uncontrolled growth cannot be sustained over time and that communities should intentionally plan the ways they want to develop.
- **Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)** – A locally designated boundary for projected growth that restricts zoning and services inside the boundary. Inner city neighborhoods are often found within UGBs, which may in turn help concentrate resources inside growth neighborhoods.
- **Comprehensive Regional Planning** – Municipal planning on a metropolitan or regional level that is based on overall, not jurisdictional, boundaries. May include changes in jurisdictional boundaries, but typically addresses services and/or land use planning.
- **New Urbanism** – A movement to build and rebuild communities on a human scale – interconnecting streets, homes with porches, pedestrian friendly traffic patterns, shared open space and greenways, local retail businesses that are near housing and services, and construction practices that are environmentally sensitive. In suburbia, may be a new “town centre” or in cities, may be called an **urban village**.
- **Greenway** – Green areas, including parks, that are often connected and accessible to the everyday lives of people in existing neighborhoods and communities.
- **Brownfield Development** – Reuse of land that is often abandoned, environmentally compromised, and has typically had an industrial tenant. Brownfields are often found in cities (frequently in low income neighborhoods) and can be remediated to productive use. A key component to maximum use of the built environment and compact development.
- **Conservation Easement** – A legal agreement, often used to preserve rural areas or greenfields, in which a government or nonprofit can purchase a property in return for the guarantee of preserving it from development.
- **Location Efficient Mortgage (LEM)** – A mortgage offered by some banks that provides a better deal to home buyers who live on transit lines and/or near work and services. Promotes development of existing communities and may provide more disposable income for lower income persons.
- **Mixed Use Development** – Projects that combine different types of development such as residential, commercial, office, industrial and institutional into one project. Mixed-use redevelopment of neighborhoods promotes comprehensive revitalization through retention or addition of housing, services and jobs.

LOCAL INITIATIVES SUPPORT CORPORATION

- **Transit Oriented Development (TOD)** – Mixed-use, higher density development centered on existing or new transportation facilities (including bus, rail, automobile, bicycle and pedestrian). In many cities, neighborhood redevelopment strategies are increasingly centered on TOD.
- **Surface Transportation** – Any form of land-based transportation (including bus, rail, automobile, bicycling and walking). This term is often used in the context of federal and state transportation funding for TOD projects and other transportation related development activities.
- **Mixed Income Housing Development** – Development that includes housing for all income levels. In urban neighborhoods, it is a tool to deconcentrate poverty. In suburban neighborhoods, it is a design principle that designates a percentage of housing to different price ranges and may include persons with very low income.
- **Inclusionary Zoning** – Zoning that requires inclusion of below market housing with all housing development that is market rate and above. Inclusionary zoning can be found in a growing number of suburban counties and has both its proponents and detractors.
- **Transfer of Development Rights** – A legal mechanism in which developers who want higher than normal project densities in growth areas can purchase or trade rights with landowners elsewhere to equalize density.
- **Green Development** – Development that uses environmentally friendly building practices and energy efficiency. There are a number of public and private incentives for green development, and increasingly, nonprofit developers use green construction as a way of increasing the expendable resources of lower income persons.
- **Impact Fees** – Fees that are charged to developers to recover government costs for items like schools, parks, emergency services or roads. Impact fees are one tool for discouraging development in open areas, but may also increase the cost of homes.
- **Job Creation Tax Credit** – A state tax credit to employers who create jobs within targeted growth areas.
- **Regentrification** – The process by which low income neighborhoods are repopulated by people with high income and the price of property may outstrip the capacity of existing residents to pay. Used often in an urban context, there is much discussion about how to keep neighborhoods open to an economically diverse population as neighborhoods are reborn. Many advocates maintain that dense neighborhoods are being repopulated and that we should ensure **equitable smart growth** practices for people of all income levels.
- **Traffic Calming** – Techniques that better integrate traffic flow and improve the quality of life in existing, dense neighborhoods. Examples include: narrower roadways, on-street parking buffers, green barriers, fewer and broader crosswalks, roundabouts and speed bumps.
- **Smart Codes** – Modification of existing state building codes to allow realistic construction requirements/costs for older buildings. New Jersey and Maryland, for instance, encourage rehabilitation by amendments that cut the costs and time of rehab work.
- **Core Jobs** – Jobs found in the core neighborhoods of cities and communities that are near housing, transit and services. Smart growth advocates place great attention on correcting the disparity between where people live and where jobs are found – in either the urban or suburban/rural context.
- **Smart Growth Incentives** – Use of tax and planning incentives by state and local governments to promote sustainable growth in developed areas and discourage growth in green areas. For instance, state funding is funneled to schools in dense, built areas and not provided for schools in new areas with no infrastructure.
- **Walkable Communities** – Communities with a quality of life that allows for housing, jobs, schools, services, and amenities to be accessible by a walk or bike ride – not a car ride.
- **Land Use Planning** – The basis for most Smart Growth discussions, planning seeks to maximize development in existing communities, minimize intrusion into green or agricultural areas and create or enhance a sustainable quality of life.

For more information about Smart Growth concepts and their connection to Community Development, contact Julia Seward in LISC's State Policy office at (202) 739-9266.