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Policy

To meet the demands of the ever increasing population and a prosperous economy, smart growth means building a political consensus (a) to support comprehensive local plans employing market-sensitive and innovative land-use planning concepts to achieve a wide range of housing choices for all Americans, (b) to fairly and fully finance infrastructure to support necessary new residential, commercial, and industrial growth, and (c) to preserve meaningful open space and protect the environment.

Background

Smart Growth understands the aspirations of Americans - the very people comprehensive growth plans are intended to serve - while protecting the environment and quality of life for all Americans.

Smart Growth touches on choices that Americans hold close to their hearts - where they live, work, and play, the education of children, commute times to work, and the economic and job opportunities created by new growth. It is an idea that addresses the questions of how best to plan for and manage when and where new residential and commercial development, schools, and major highways should be built and located; how and where to preserve meaningful open space and protect environmentally-sensitive areas; and how to pay for the infrastructure required to serve a growing population.

How well we plan for projected and inevitable increases in households, changing demographics and lifestyles and an expanding economy will have a major impact on the quality of life in years ahead. When used properly as a planning tool, Smart Growth can help expand homeownership opportunities and allow Americans to obtain the home and lifestyle of their dreams in new suburban as well as in older suburban and city infill markets. When used improperly, growth management becomes a tool to stop or slow growth. Such a move would penalize and put at greatest risk those living at the edge of housing affordability - the young, minorities, immigrants, and moderate-income families who are just entering the homeownership market in record numbers.

Residential and commercial growth is fluid - meaning that when it is stopped in one place, it will inevitably occur somewhere else. No-growth approaches are, in part, responsible for the leapfrog development patterns of the past. Dwelling on past development patterns does not recognize the fact that public policy and the housing preferences of Americans dictate where future development occurs. Notwithstanding that revitalization of older suburban and inner city markets and infill development is good public policy, even under the best of conditions, infill development will satisfy only a small percentage of a community's demand for new housing.

In repeated surveys and polls, the public shows a strong preference for planning at the local level and against any federal government control over local planning decisions. Rather, the appropriate federal role is seen as providing encouragement to local communities to adopt long-term comprehensive plans that will meet the demand for new housing, public infrastructure, and other services in the decade ahead.

Some federal efforts have proposed rewarding state and local governments if they adopt specific planning guidelines. This top-down intrusion by federal agencies into local land use planning is in direct conflict with the autonomous authority of state and local governments over land use policy.

Solutions

- Smart growth requires adherence to all of the following:
 - Planning for and accommodating anticipated growth in economic activity, population, and housing demand as well as ongoing changes in demographics and lifestyles while protecting the environment.
 - Providing for a wide range of housing types to suit the needs, preferences, and income levels of a community's diverse population.
 - Adopting a comprehensive land-use planning process at the local level that clearly identifies land uses, such as residential, commercial, recreational, and industrial as well as land to be set aside as meaningful open space.
 - Adopting balanced and reliable means to finance and pay for the construction and expansion of roads, schools, water and sewer facilities, and other infrastructure required to serve a prosperous community.
 - Using land more efficiently by allowing higher density development and innovative land use policies and encouraging mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly developments with access to open space and mass transit.
 - Revitalizing older suburban and inner-city markets and encouraging infill development.
- Oppose further federal intervention into state and local land use planning.

Related Resolutions

[Smart Growth Policy Statement: Building Better Places to Live, Work, and Play](#)
[Addition to NAHB's Smart Growth Policy Statement](#)

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